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Current Reforms in China's Public Administration:
The Rise of the Bureaucracy and Decentralization

by

Stephen Kwokchuan Ma

(C)

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the current reform movement -- the Gengshen Reforms -- in the People's Republic of China. It investigates the environment which has occasioned China's administrative structure. It also looks into two of the principal products of the movement: the rise of the bureaucracy and administrative decentralization. The reforms urge a reevaluation of the roles of the Party and Government and a realignment of power within the administrative apparatus. The movement therefore is forging a new relationship between state and party and a new balance between centralization and decentralization. Following an exploration of the changes, this thesis addresses such issues as the implication of the reforms and possible future developments.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. Introduction.....	1
II. The Environment of Administrative Reform.....	5
Features of the nation.....	5
The Party's control of government.....	11
The mechanisms of the Party's control.....	12
The blurring of Party and government functions....	14
Characteristics of politics in the PRC.....	18
Public administration, bureaucracy and bureaucratism	19
III. The Rise of the Bureaucracy.....	23
The Gengshen Reforms.....	23
Deng's call for reforms and his motives.....	26
The separation of the Party and government functions	30
The third rise of the bureaucracy in the PRC.....	38
IV. Decentralization.....	42
Centralization in the first years of the PRC.....	42
Decentralization of 1957-1958.....	46
Recentralization in the early 1960s.....	48
Decentralization in the "Cultural Revolution".....	50
Decentralization after the "Cultural Revolution"...	51
Special economic zones.....	53
Fourteen open coastal cities.....	57
Cities administering counties.....	62

Economic zones.....	67
V. Conclusion.....	75
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	87

I. Introduction

The late Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Mao Zedong stated as early as 1954 that "the force at the core leading our course forward is the Chinese Communist Party".¹ This assertion became a principle which permeated every aspect of Chinese society. The concept of "the Party's centralized leadership" has found its embodiment everywhere, even in public administration. Indeed, the history of the People's Republic is a history of the continuing implementation and enforcement of the doctrine. The resulting consequences for public administration are an overconcentration of power in the Party, an overemphasis on being "red" and overplaying of the leading role at the central level. At the same time underestimation of the bureaucracy, downplaying of intelligentsia, knowledge and expertise, and distrust of initiative at the lower levels are common. The past three decades saw, accidentally, a sort of reliance upon the state apparatus for economic development rather than upon political movements. Sometimes more attention was paid to competence as one of the criteria for recruitment into the bureaucracy rather than one-sided insistence on political loyalty. The policy of "walking on two legs" tried to delegate certain power to the lower levels of government and to mobilize the initiative there. The main trend, however, of safeguarding the Party's centralized leadership and

¹ Mao Zedong, "Opening Address at the First Session of the First National People's Congress of the PRC", September 15, 1954, in Stuart R. Schram (ed.), *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1967) p.1

the slogan "politics takes command"¹ remained unchanged and are regarded as immutable rules. It once seemed that such a doctrine would bring about both efficient administration and effective political mobilization.

In 1980 Deng Xiaoping raised for the first time in the CCP the issue of the reform of the relationship between state and party. Many of the maladies in public administration were then exposed and attacked. At the top of a list of problems is the issue of the system of the Party and State leadership. Such a system resulted in overconcentration of power in the Party. Deng's call for reforms ushered in a reevaluation of the roles of the Party and Government and a realignment of power within the administrative apparatus. Clearly the reforms have far-reaching implications for China's future in terms of maintaining a balance between politics and expertise and between centralization and decentralization.

The thesis explores two results of the current administrative reforms: the strengthening and rationalization of the bureaucracy and administrative decentralization. After the introductory chapter, Chapter Two describes the environment of the nation's public administration and explores the whys and hows of administrative centralization and of the Party's control over government. The same chapter also exposes some of the

¹The slogan did not receive public criticism until recently. A high-ranking army official pointed out that "the slogan 'politics takes command' cannot precisely and properly indicate the relationship between politics and economy, spirit and material, political work and other work. For a long period of time it has become a synonym of massive political movement" and must be disused. See *Renmin Ribao*, July 23, 1984

characteristics of politics in China, the fate of public administration as a discipline and the interpretation of bureaucracy as a term there. This information helps to better understand China's management structure. Chapters Three and Four deal with two of the main aspects of the Gengshen Reforms: the rise of the bureaucracy and administrative decentralization. The changes occurring in the process of the reforms are radical and command attention all over the world. The implication of the reform movement is being studied everywhere. In the concluding chapter the author joins other scholars in evaluating the reforms.

Sources of information for the thesis include *Renmin Ribao* and *Guangming Ribao* -- two of the main newspapers in China, *China Daily* -- the only English newspaper from the PRC, and *Beijing Review* -- a weekly newspaper. All these publications by the Chinese Government express its official viewpoints on contemporary issues. Works on China written by Western scholars as well as their articles in magazines such as *Problems of Communism* and *The China Quarterly* analyze China from the perspective of Western social science. Due to the dearth of information available in China, these Sinologists' views on China are important for understanding that country. An old Chinese saying states that "a waterfront pavilion gets the moonlight first". The advantage of being in a favourable position renders much information on China accessible to observers in Hong Kong. This makes publications on that tiny island such as *Ming Pao*, *Cheng Ming*, *The Seventies*³ and *Far Eastern Economic Review* -----
³It has been renamed *The Nineties* since May 1984.

indispensable for study of China. Still, this research paper, based on abovementioned, limited materials, cannot be considered a complete and thorough one. It would rather be regarded as the writer's tentative effort to explore a certain aspect of China. Much more information is needed for a fuller understanding of the topic.

II. The Environment of Administrative Reform

Features of the nation

The administrative structure of any nation is the product of a specific environment. This is as true for the PRC, as it is for Canada or the United States. The PRC's economic situation, political philosophy, and historical tradition have occasioned an centralized administrative machinery directly supervised by the Party. The alleviation of imbalances in regional economic development needs intervention by a strong central government. Food supply in some provinces heavily depends on the central authorities. The nation has a tradition of enjoying centralized administration. The Party stresses the importance of its centralized leadership. That is the reality of China and the framework for shaping the administrative apparatus there.

China is the world's most populous country. According to the 1982 census (the third since the founding of the PRC), China's population (including Taiwan Province) is 1,031,882,511.⁴ A comparison of the 1982 and 1964 censuses provides valuable information for understanding China's public administration and society. In 18 years the population increased by 313,593,529 in 29 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions on mainland China -- at an annual growth rate of 2.1 per cent. In order to control the population within limits of 1.2 billion by the end of the century -- one of the goals established by the Government -- the

⁴ *Renmin Ribao*, October 28, 1982

annual population growth rate must be held below 0.95 per cent. The related difficulty is to feed the huge population. Even if the nation's population could be kept below 1.2 billion by the year 2000, and even if the total grain output could achieve 460 million tons by then, holdings of per capita grain would only approach or reach 400 kg.* Obviously, the figure to be reached in the 15 years stands in sharp contrast with 1,000 kg. achieved by some of the advanced countries in the early 1950s.* Hence the issues of birth control and the supply of food are urgent tasks for the state. Both require tremendous effort and resources which cannot be provided by local governments alone.

China is the third largest country in the world. Yet per capita arable land in 1981 was only or 0.1 hectares,* contrasting 1.86 hectares in Canada.* In addition, economic disparity has long been existed between coastal and interior regions. As Chu-yuan Chen discovers,

In 1952, industrial output in the seven coastal provinces(Liaoning, Hebei, Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian and Guangdong) accounted for 68 percent of the national total. ... Roughly 80 percent of the steel, 90 percent of the electric power, and 88 percent of the cotton cloth were produced in the coastal region. Even agricultural resources heavily favored this region. Although the seven coastal provinces take up only 11 percent of the total land area, they accounted for one-third of China's

**Renmin Ribao*, January 30, 1983. Per capita holding of grain in 1983 amounted to 379.5 kg., 29 kg. more than that in 1982, according to *China Daily* of May 3, 1984

**Ibid.*

**Ibid.*

**The World Almanac & Book of Facts: 1981*, (New York: Newspaper Enterprises Association, Inc., 1980) p.523

total cultivated area and for the bulk of its modern transportation facilities.'

Since 1949 the Chinese Government has undertaken various measures in its efforts to balance the distribution of economic resources between the coastal regions and the interior. The changes achieved, however, are not profound. In 1973, the coastal area still provided 64.1 per cent of gross value of industrial output in comparison with 68.3 per cent in 1952.⁹ Clearly, the task of altering the regional distribution of economic strength and of alleviating the gap between more and less developed regions necessitates more work by the Chinese Government.

The PRC is a socialist state under the people's democratic dictatorship "led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants".¹⁰ The leadership by the working class has found its full embodiment in the leadership by the CCP which is "the vanguard of the Chinese working class".¹¹ The Party's centralized leadership has long been regarded as imperative and has ensured that the Party alone has the authority to make basic

⁹Chu-yuan Cheng, *China's Economic Development: Growth and Structural Change*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press 1982) p.431. In defining coastal provinces, the book differs from an article in *Renmin Ribao* of November 16, 1982, which mentioned eleven coastal provinces, municipalities and autonomous region. Though the seven coastal provinces in the book obviously include the three coastal municipalities -- Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region is not considered coastal in the book as it is in *Renmin Ribao*.

¹⁰Charles Robert Roll, Jr. and Kung-chia Yeh, "Balance in Coastal and Inland Industrial Development" in Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, *China: A Reassessment of the Economy*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975) p.88

¹¹"Constitution of the People's Republic of China", *Beijing Review*, Vol.25, No.52, December 27, 1982., p.12

¹²"Constitution of the Communist Party of China", *Beijing Review*, Vol.25, No.38, September 20, 1982. p.8

policy decisions. In one of his internally circulated articles entitled "Sixty Points on Working Methods", Mao wrote that "essential powers should be concentrated collectively in the hands of the Party committees of the Center and regions, so as to combat the diffusion of powers".¹³ Considering the Party's predominant role in all fields of life, including government, one should not be surprised by the Party's control over the administration.

In exploring the environmental pressures that have moulded the Canadian public service, J.E.Hodgetts describes as constants such factors as geography and the political system. For him, these have remained relatively unchanged.¹⁴ It is true in Canada that "a physical decentralization of the work force" meets "the challenge of administering across a continent" and provides "the flexible response to the contemporary state's positive welfare and regulatory functions".¹⁵ It seems, however, quite logical for so long in China that only a centralized government would perform its directory as well as regulatory functions effectively on a land a little smaller than Canada and enjoying similar economic disparity as Canada. Should the difference in outcome be ascribed to China's historical tradition where a truly centralized government could be traced back to the Qin Empire of 221-207 B.C.,¹⁶ or to the political system? More likely, a

¹³Jerome Ch'en(ed.), *Mao Papers: Anthology and Bibliography*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) p.69

¹⁴J.E.Hodgetts, "Challenge and Response: A Retropective View of the Public Service of Canada" in Kenneth Kernaghan(ed.), *Public Administration in Canada*(Toronto: Methuen, 1982) p.31

¹⁵Ibid. p.32

¹⁶Ch'ien Mu, *Traditional Government in Imperial China: A Critical Analysis*, (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press) p.1. As Ch'ien delineates, "A truly unified government first emerged in Chinese

centralized government is a function of the above-mentioned factors taken together. People are used to unity rather than diversity. The Party's philosophy, though being democratic centralism, visibly stresses the noun rather than the adjective.

The population problem, regional disparities, and the political system continue to play a significant part in Chinese public administration. They jointly contribute to administrative centralization. But other factors exerted an impact on China's governmental structure, reversing the centripetal tendency which had been dominant in the past. One of them, and probably the most important, is undoubtedly Deng Xiaoping's third resurgence in the political arena. Known as "China's foremost pragmatist", a "reasonable man, also a hard man",¹¹ Deng, when reaching the apex of power, often pointed out the seriousness and the harmful consequences of overconcentration of power. Thereafter calls for administrative reform were heard more frequently.

The movement for "four modernizations"¹² serves as another driving force for decentralization in administration. "With the economy evolving to a higher stage and economic relationships becoming more complex, administrative methods are no longer sufficient, and even fetter economic progress".¹³ Enterprises

¹¹ (cont'd) history with the rise of the Ch'in Empire (221-207 B.C.). ... With the advent of the Ch'in, shortly followed by the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to A.D. 220), local areas ceased to be autonomous domains of feudal barons".

¹² Theodore H. White, "China: Burnout of a Revolution", *Time*, September 26, 1983. p.42

¹³ The movement refers to modernization in industry, agriculture, science and technology, and national defence.

¹⁴ *China Daily*, May 5, 1984

should no longer remain subordinate units in state administrative departments. Instead, they deserve many rights which are essential to their survival and development but were once abolished by the superior administrative agencies. A ten-day seminar, hosted by the Committee on State Structural Reforms in April 1984, argued that departments of the Central Government and provincial governments, municipalities and autonomous regions must simplify administration and delegate powers from the Center to the localities and from administrative departments to enterprises.²⁰ The meeting entitled "Seminar on Experimental Work in Structural Reform of Municipal Economy", perceived not only the necessity of broadening the autonomy and responsibilities of cities but also the need to grant municipal enterprises the capacity to plan production, to use capital, and to manage personnel. Apparently, the delegation of power was regarded as one of the key measures in bringing about a "new breakthrough" in structural reform of municipal economy, thereby accelerating the tempo of modernization. Why is it in modern China that industrialization and modernization seem to be leading toward administrative decentralization? Could it be explained by the fact that a much centralized government would be unable to assist effectively in economic development, because local demands might be poorly responded to?²¹ To find an answer to this question requires both research in theory and experiment in practice.

²⁰Renmin Ribao, April 27, 1984

²¹It is interesting to read that "industrialization is probably the most important force that would contribute to national integration" -- "more centripetal federalism" in Canada, in Garth Stevenson, *Unfulfilled Union: Canadian Federalism and National Unity*, Revised Edition, (Toronto: Gage Publishing Ltd., 1982) p.231-233

The Party's control of government

As "the core of leadership", the CCP dominates Chinese society and public administration. All institutions function under the Party's direction. The practice of exercising the Party's control over governmental agencies is modelled after Lenin's example in the Soviet Union. As Harry Harding points out:

Lenin considered the Party to be the most important instrument of control. In the immediate postrevolutionary period, he authorized the Party to lead the operations of the government, just as it had led the trade unions and other mass organizations during the revolution. Those years witnessed vigorous efforts to increase the proportion of government posts held by Party members and to strengthen Party cells and branches inside the state bureaucracy. In March 1919 the Eighth Party Congress authorized the Party to guide and control the state by issuing directives on policy matters to the Party cells inside the government bureaucracy. The cells were then to see that state officials carried out the directives.²²

The Party's leading role also reflects Mao's concern "with the 'dangers' inherent in the institutionalization of governmental administration, which tends to produce inter-elite conflicts, clashes of interests, and loyalties that are not focused solely on the paramount leader".²³

China is a society characterized by a distrust of bureaucracy.

²²Harry Harding, *Organizing China: The Problem of Bureaucracy: 1949-1976*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981) p.23

²³Lucian W. Pye, *The Dynamics of Factions and Consensus in Chinese Politics: A Model and Some Propositions*, p.81

In the past centuries "emperors constantly had to guard against their ministers' advocating special bureaucratic interests".²⁴ As well, in the formative years of the CCP, it took quite a while for the Communists to recruit enough young revolutionaries to staff the administrative apparatus in liberated areas and guerilla areas. In the latter areas fighting was underway. The Communists had to go underground in order to survive and keep up the struggle. Under these circumstances, a large management bureaucracy was obviously unattainable. More importantly, a small organization would guarantee to promptly carry out Party policies. Consequently, due to the lack of personnel, the pressure of the war conditions and the extraordinary significance of ensuring faithful implementation of Party's instructions in the prerevolutionary period, "China's legacy from the guerilla war has meant that distinction between the Party and the State has been blurred and that, on occasions, the personnel of the two apparatus has been identical".²⁵ Indeed, the Party's overall control of the administrative machinery was so thorough that the former sometimes assumed the latter's role in policy implementation.

The mechanisms of Party's control

The Party controls the administration in several ways. These include:

1. The formation within the Party of a kind of "shadow government", which provides policy guidance to government agencies. For

²⁴ Ibid., p.82

²⁵ Tony Saich, *China: Politics and Government*, (Hong Kong: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1981) p.92

example, the Department of Propaganda under the Central Committee of the CCP directs such ministries as the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health under the State Council.

2. The establishment of Party committees or branches in government organizations.
3. The appointment of Party members to key positions in government bodies.
4. The designation of Party members to head personnel units and staff offices, which play an essential role in administration through transfer, promotion and demotion of staff, or through having access to confidential documents, coordinating and servicing other departments.²

The main consequences of the Party's control over government are the blurring of Party and government responsibilities, the substitution of the responsibilities of the former for those of the latter and an excessive centralization of power in the Party. As Deng argues,

This is done in the name of strengthening centralized Party leadership, and it is often the case that the power of a Party committee is in the hands of a few secretaries, especially its first secretary,

² 'A. Doak Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy and Political Power in Communist China*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967) p.18-20. Barnett outlined seven different measures by which Party's control and leadership of government organizations would be ensured. "Party Fraction" (dangzu) is actually a substitution for Party committee or branch in some governmental institutions such as central ministries. Using mass organizations and regular political study sessions to reinforce Party control may be termed as intangible since they, without taking an official form in bureaucratic hierarchy, only exercise influence rather than wield power.

who directs and decides everything. Thus centralized Party leadership is often turned into leadership by individuals.''

The blurring of Party and government functions

For more than twenty years after the founding of the PRC, Mao Zedong chaired the Party, and Zhou Enlai headed the government. In the Central Government there were also non-Communist ministers, although there was always "a first vice-minister who is a reliable party man and acts as a minister in everything but name".²⁷ At the provincial level, the governorship and the Party secretaryship were held by different persons. With the increased control of the Party over the government, however, the earlier practice of assigning non-Communist personnel to leading positions in certain state organs, including ministries of the Central Government, was finally eliminated.²⁸ During the "Cultural Revolution", "every one of the twenty-nine provincial-level Party first secretaries [was] ... chairman of the corresponding revolutionary committee".²⁹ Such an approach, aimed at ensuring the Party's unified leadership, culminated in the 11th Party Congress in August 1977, where Hua Guofeng was given unprecedented power when he was acknowledged as Party Chairman, Premier of the State Council and Chairman of the Party's Military Commission. Thus only Party officials could be appointed to high positions in the bureaucracy and only they could

²⁷ See Deng's speech, p.19

²⁸ George P. Jan(ed.), *Government of Communist China*, p.268

²⁹ Harold W. Jacobson, "The Political System", in Harold C. Hinton(ed.), *The People's Republic of China: A Handbook*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1979) p.128

³⁰ Ibid., p.163

head both the Party and government organs. This demonstrates aptly the relationship between the Party and the civil service. Ferrel Heady interprets such a phenomenon as "a basic distrust of bureaucratic responsiveness and a desire to curb bureaucratic power, combined with reluctant acceptance of the inevitable need to maintain a state bureaucratic apparatus" and also "a determination to politicize the bureaucracy and make it responsive to party direction".³¹ In fact, distrust and contempt for the administrative apparatus contribute to the reduction of the government's status. Since most civil servants are Party members, it might be safer to state that such a reduction emanates chiefly from contempt rather than distrust. In Mao's opinion, the inexperienced could lead professionals. Party members, though lacking experience and expertise in administration, are still assigned to head government agencies and to direct technical and administrative experts. The preferred method of policy implementation was mobilization of the populace and class struggle, characterized by political enthusiasm, rather than rule by a bureaucracy that necessitates knowledge and expertise.³²

The "Cultural Revolution" "involved proposals for the destruction of bureaucracy".³³ The removal of Liu Shaoqi in 1967 from the post of President of the State together with the following purge of about two-thirds of the officials of the central

³¹ Ferrel Heady, *Public Administration: A Comparative Perspective*, (New York: Marcel Dekker, Inc., 1979) p.375

³² Michel Oksenberg and Richard Bush, "China's Political Evolution: 1972-82", *Problem of Communism*, September/October 1982, No.5, p.15

³³ Harry Harding, *Organizing China: The Problem of Bureaucracy 1949-1976*, p.263

bureaucracy'' indicated how seriously the bureaucratic apparatus was damaged in the process of the movement. Lowell Dittmer's note of "original cultural objectives" of the "Cultural Revolution"'' is misleading, though the error could be understandably ascribed to the dearth of information at the time when he wrote and the fact that the movement's motives were not then understood. Even the name of the "Cultural Revolution" *per se* was somehow confusing and deceiving. Lucian W. Pye admits that

We cannot be sure about exactly what happened or why. The Cultural Revolution defies full explanation, and many interpretations of it are possible. Some scholars have seen it as an ideologically inspired event in which those who share a Maoist vision set out to destroy all who did not. Others have treated the Cultural Revolution as a power struggle over succession to Mao's leadership.''

As the clouds clear away, it becomes evident that the purposes of the "Cultural Revolution" were political and organizational rather than cultural. Harry Harding is certainly correct in pointing out that the "Cultural Revolution" was launched to "halt the emergence of revisionism in China" and to avoid the "degeneration of the leadership of the Party and the state" by means of undertaking "organizational reforms that could make this degeneration less likely -- to create, in other words, a form of

''Lowell Dittmer, "Revolution and Reconstruction in Contemporary Chinese Bureaucracy", *Journal of Comparative Administration*, Vol.5, No.4, February 1974, p.466

'' Ibid., p.479

''Lucian W. Pye, *China: An Introduction*, (Boston/Toronto: Little Brown and Company, 1978) p.289

political organization that could help prevent the emergence of revisionism".³⁷ Two implications were included in "organizational reforms": the break-down of the old bureaucratic machine and the establishment of a new apparatus. Unfortunately, the collapse of the former was not followed by the emergence of a better alternative. Instead, what the "Cultural Revolution" left behind was revolutionary committees neither efficient enough to perform the assigned administrative functions properly nor effective enough to achieve the original goal of avoiding the bureaucratism which was said to cause the degeneration of the cadres. The revolutionary committees assumed functions of both the Party and State machinery. They were "three-in-one alliances" comprising representatives from the mass organizations, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and "revolutionary cadres". The fact that neither those formerly common people nor the military had sufficient administrative knowledge and experience should be responsible for unsatisfactory performance of the revolutionary committees. Moreover, the blurring of the Party and government responsibilities could only cause confusion and problems in administration. Bureaucratism, instead of being averted, was aggravated. Consequently one should not be surprised at the outcome of the "Cultural Revolution". With the excessive concentration of power in a few Party leaders, coupled with contempt for expert administrators, the administration was handicapped. This situation prevailed until August 1980 when Deng's "reform" speech ushered in a new period of bureaucratic revitalization, the recognition of the significance of knowledge

³⁷Harry Harding, *Organizing China: The Problem of Bureaucracy 1949-1976*, p.235

and expertise, and a new relationship between the Party and government.

Characteristics of politics in the PRC

With the Party being "the force at the core", its influence is pervasive. A logical extension of Party's dominant role is that the Party leaders' words are often regarded as guiding principles. Rule by men rather than rule by law describes Chinese politics. This style ultimately culminated in the "Cultural Revolution" when Mao's words were said to express various truth. This prompted many Sinologists to start their study on China with exploration of the CCP, its leaders, and especially its founder Mao.

During the "Cultural Revolution" Mao Zedong Thought was described as the "highest form of Marxism-Leninism in the present era". Mao was no longer regarded in China as a human being, but as a God, whose wisdom had no compare. The cult of Mao did not wane until the downfall in the late 1970s of "whatever faction" who claimed that "whatever policy Chairman Mao has decided upon, we shall resolutely defend; whatever instructions the Chairman has issued, we shall steadfastly obey". Even though Deng fervently advocates that "practice is the sole criterion of truth" in order to unbind the constraints imposed by Mao's dogmas,³ it is unlikely that Mao's influence will disappear in the foreseeable future. To deviate from Mao's framework and embark on a new path incompatible with Maoism is doomed to create opposition. It

³*Parris H. Chang, "Chinese Politics: Deng's Turbulent Quest", *Problems of Communism*, January/February 1981, p.4

requires considerable efforts to overcome the hurdles occasioned by "God-worshipping" in the past years.

Mao's statement that "the correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line decides everything" reflects powerfully the tremendous role of ideology in Chinese society. On one hand, the ideological education of the populace allowed the Party to implement fundamental social changes. On the other hand, the Party monopolizes the right to interpret the correctness of the line, resulting in the subordination of government to the Party. In addition, political--ideological work is considered to be the lifeblood of all economic work. As a result, "political purity first and professional competence second" became an established standard for evaluation. Deng, though obviously trying to reinstate the importance of knowledge and ability, has to put revolutionary qualities at the first place in promotion of cadres. It could be that Deng takes it as an armour to protect himself from leftists' attack. Though the scales are moving towards professional competence rather than political affinity, the role of ideology in China should not be underestimated.

Public administration, bureaucracy and bureaucratism

For many of the Chinese, public administration is a new and exotic concept, although as early as the period of Warring States(403-222 B.C.) a scholar named Shen Buhai "provided a set of principles which have been likened to twentieth-century theories of administration".³ More than two thousand years

³Martin Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, (London: Macmillan, 1970) p.16. See also H.G.Creel, "The Beginnings of Bureaucracy in China: The Origin of the

have elapsed since, but the public of modern China is not much more familiar with public administration as a discipline. Perhaps, public administration, as administration of governmental affairs, was once a field exclusively for the Party elite, but not for the public, and therefore should not be studied widely? While the backdoorism was (and probably is still) rampant in China, and contacts (guanxi) still play a key role, the importance of personnel management has become quite widely appreciated by the Chinese. Few, however, are aware that personnel management is only one component of public administration. If there were more students in this field, the process of current reforms would meet fewer turns and twists.

At the same time, bureaucracy, a term intimately linked to public administration, has probably a less enviable fate. As a neutral expression, it "refers primarily to government agencies that are characterized by day-to-day policy implementation, routine, complex procedures, specialization of duties, rights of authority and status and resistance to change".⁴⁰ But when referring to government agencies, Chinese use "state organs" instead. And what has added a much stronger pejorative implication to the word "bureaucracy" is not only the so-called bureaupathology or bureaucratism but the fact that the ideas of bureaucracy and

³⁹ (cont'd) Hsien", *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 23, 1964, pp. 155-84. As Creel remarks, "Shen, who died in 337 B.C., was highly successful chancellor of a small state in north central China. A book attributed to his authorship had wide circulation in Han times and was studied by emperors and statesmen. It helped to shape the administrative practices of the Chin (221-207 B.C.) and Han dynasties". p. 159

⁴⁰ Ralph C. Chandler and Jack C. Plano, *The Public Administration Dictionary*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1982) p. 155

capitalism were linked, and that bureaucratic-capitalism together with imperialism and feudalism were treated as three mortal enemies of the new-born People's Republic.⁴¹ The Three-Anti Campaign -- a mass political movement against corruption, waste and bureaucratism in state organs, launched during the first years of the New China, could but make bureaucracy more like a synonym of bureaucratism and "bureaucrat" an ugly-sounding and unwelcome name, badly disliked by those who work in government agencies. Linguistic dissimilarity has also done its part, making "bureaucrat" a less favourable term in China. While "bureaucrat" and "civil servant" in English are two related words and can be exchanged, their respective translations in Chinese "guanliao" and "gongpu" could hardly match each other and are almost antonyms. The former means officials in the old societies, thereby bearing a derogatory connotation, but the latter implies service to the people and sounds much more proletarian.

Thus, bureaucratism is quite well-known and enjoys a notorious reputation. Nonetheless a list of its bad points was not made officially until August 1980 when Deng called for sweeping administrative reform. As Deng describes it, bureaucratism displays itself mainly

standing high above the masses; abusing
power; divorcing oneself from the reality
and the masses; putting up a facade; indulging
in empty talk; sticking to a rigid way of

⁴¹ Mao Zedong, "Closing Speech at the Second Session of the First National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference", June 23, 1950. See *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-tung* p.8

thinking; following conventions; overstaffing administrative organs; being dilatory; inefficient and irresponsible; failing to keep one's word; passing documents round without solving problems; shifting responsibility to others; and even assuming grand airs as bureaucrats; reprimanding others all too often; attacking others in revenge; suppressing democracy; deceiving one's superiors and subordinates; being arbitrary and despotic; practising favourism; offering bribes; participating in corrupt practices in violation of the law; and so on.⁴¹

Articles on bureaucratism since began to appear in newspapers in forms of case studies, news reports or letters from readers. Comprehensive anatomy and vivid descriptions of bureaucratic pathology as well as indignant complaints evoked strong reaction across the country. Interestingly, criticisms often went beyond the case and touched the root of the evil -- an inappropriate administrative system.

Clearly, it is the environment in China that has framed the administrative structure there. With little environmental change, China's public administration has remained a centralized one and has been placed under direct control by the Party. Deng's political revitalization has altered that environment and has given birth to administrative reform. The role of the bureaucracy began to be reevaluated.

⁴¹Deng Xiaoping, "On the Reform of the System of Party and State Leadership", *Beijing Review*, October 3, 1983. Vol.26, No.40, p.18

III. The Rise of the Bureaucracy

The Gengshen Reforms

Only thirty years after the founding of the PRC radical reforms began to take place. Conspicuous changes prompted, among other things, the rise of the bureaucracy and the delegation of power to lower levels of government. Undoubtedly, alterations in administration resulted from major changes in Chinese society and politics. A major change was Deng's third resurgence in Chinese politics. The nation's desperate plight after the "Cultural Revolution", Deng's personal sufferings in ten years' turmoil and his pragmatism led him to launch the reform movement.

The reforms gained momentum in the summer of 1980 when Deng, the then Vice-Premier, presented a speech entitled "On the Reform of the System of Party and State Leadership" at the August meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CCP. Nonetheless the nickname "Gengshen Reforms" was really coined not by Deng, but by Liao Gailong, an officer in the Policy Research Office of the Central Committee of the CCP. In his report on October 25, 1980 at the National Party School Forum, Liao remarked that:

The reforms of our country under socialist conditions decided at the enlarged meeting of the Politburo of the Party Central Committee held in August this year and the Third Session of the Fifth National People's Congress that followed, i.e., the reforms of the Party and State systems, have already begun. We are now in 1980, the Keng-shen Year (the Year of Monkey) according to the Chinese lunar calendar. I think that this

reform may be called the "1980 Reform" or the "Keng-shen Reform". In my opinion, the future chronicle of the People's Republic of China will set a high value on this socialist reform which begins in the 1980s of the 20th century -- the Keng-shen Reform. The program of the Keng-shen Reform is based on Comrade Teng Hsiao-ping's speech at the enlarged meeting of the Politburo on August 18.⁴³

Liao correctly asserts that Deng's speech launched the Gengshen Reforms. In disclosing such perennial Chinese problems as "bureaucratism, overcentralization of power, the patriarchal way of doing things, life-long tenure of leading posts and various kinds of privileges",⁴⁴ Deng went much farther than other recent Chinese leaders. What is also significant is that Deng not only identified certain pathologies but also pointed out their origin -- overconcentration of power in the Party.

The notion of power is intimately associated with the leadership of the Communist Party. Therefore, critiques of overconcentration of power could easily be interpreted as opposition to the Party and attempts to usurp the Communist leadership and to overthrow socialist regime. During the Hundred Flowers period in 1957, intellectuals, encouraged by Mao's call -- "let a hundred flowers blossom, a hundred schools contend", complained, among other things, that "the Communists had monopolized power and positions, and that non-Communists were

⁴³Liao Gailong, "Historical Experience and Our Road of Development", *Issues and Studies*, December 1981, Vol. XVII, No. 12, p. 85. The spelling of "Keng-shen" and "Teng Hsiao-ping" here should be "Gengshen" and "Deng Xiaoping" respectively according to the new *pinyin* system, which is used in China and has been accepted by Canada, the United States of America and other countries.

⁴⁴See Deng's speech, p. 18

given merely nominal positions to create the deceptive appearance of a 'coalition government'".⁴⁵ As a result, the movement rapidly evolved into a nation-wide campaign against "rightists", with most of the critics being blamed as rightist elements who, together with the landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries and bad elements, formed the five bad elements in Chinese society. But in 1980 the critique of the Party came from within the Party itself. Deng states that:

[It] is inappropriate to have overconcentration of power which hinders the implementation of socialist democratic system and the Party's democratic centralism and impedes the development of socialist construction and of collective wisdom. Overconcentration of power is liable to give rise to arbitrary rule by individuals at the expense of collective leadership, and it constitutes an important cause of bureaucratism under the present conditions.⁴⁶

Certainly there was no reason for Deng to fear that his views would be rejected, that his plan would be aborted, or that he would be seen as a "rightist" element. By then those who were sympathetic to his ideas had taken charge of various areas of reform. Chen Yun (economy, Party affairs and discipline) was elected Vice-Chairman of the Party in December 1978. Hu Yaobang (Party work and organization) and Zhao Ziyang (government, economy) were elevated to the Politburo's Standing Committee in February 1980. Peng Zhen (legislative and judicial systems) became a member of the Politburo

⁴⁵ Theodore Hsi-en Chen, "The Thought Reform of Intellectuals", in George P. Jan(ed.), *Government of Communist China*, (San Fransisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1966) p.484

⁴⁶ See Deng's speech, p.14

in September 1979. Though there was doubt whether Hu, Zhao and their colleagues would propel China into the modern era according to the blueprint of reform designed by Deng,⁴⁷ the past years proved that the reforms were not dubbed the "Gengshen Reforms" too "prematurely".⁴⁸ When Deng told Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone this spring that "if the sky falls, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang can hold it up",⁴⁹ his words clearly reflected his confidence in them as well as in the further development of the reform along his line.

Deng's call for reforms and his motives

It is Deng's August "reform" speech that prompted changes in the relationship between the Party and the civil service. A reflection of the reforming zeal are two principles included in the new Constitution of the PRC adopted on December 4, 1982. First, everyone is "equal before the law".⁵⁰ Rule by law must replace rule by men. Second, "no organization or individual may enjoy the privilege of being above the Constitution".⁵¹ Even the CCP, the only ruling Party in China, must subordinate itself to the Constitution of the PRC which it helped to frame. The practice of ignoring and trampling on the Constitution, as was the case in the "Cultural Revolution", must not be duplicated.

⁴⁷ Parris H. Chang, "Chinese Politics: Deng's Turbulent Quest", *Problems of Communism*, January/February 1981, p.21

⁴⁸ Richard D. Nethercut, "Leadership in China: Rivalry, Reform and Renewal", *Problems of Communism*, March/April 1983, p.36

⁴⁹ *Newsweek*, April 30, 1984, p.38

⁵⁰ "Constitution of the People's Republic of China", Article 33, *Beijing Review*, Vol.25, No.52, Dec. 27, 1982, p.16

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Article 5

The new Constitution of the CCP, adopted on September 6, 1982, also states that "the Party must conduct its activities within the limits permitted by the Constitution and the laws of the state".²² These statements, officially confirmed in the legal documents of both the state and the Party, "clearly illustrate the Party's intention to realize the separation of the Party from the administration and to terminate the substitution of the Party for the government".²³ Articles stressing the importance of knowledge, expertise and the science of administration began to appear in the media. For the Chinese people and especially for the young generation, it was probably their first exposure to the notion that the cadres might lack knowledge and expertise. Though enjoying many strengths, the cadres' working methods and habits formed in years of class struggle, such as emphasizing political background, ignoring education and competence, looking down upon intellectuals, while being shy of the knowledge necessary for modern administration, have proven to be inappropriate for the national modernization.²⁴ The consequences of excessive concentration of power in one or a few Party veterans have been recognized. In his "reform" speech, Deng argues:

Overcentralization of power in the hands of one individual or a few people means that most functionaries have no decision-making power while the few people having power are overburdened with work. This inevitably leads to bureaucratism and various kinds of mistakes

²²"Constitution of the Communist Party of China", *Beijing Review*, Vol.25, No.38, Sept. 20, 1982, p.10

²³Qi Xin, "China: Slowly Progressing in Transition Period", *The Seventies*, January 1983, p.8

²⁴*Renmin Ribao*, Jan. 13, & Feb. 17, 1983

and inevitably impairs the democratic life, collective leadership, democratic centralism and division of labour with individual responsibilities in the Party and government organizations at all levels. ... We tried several times to divide power between the central and local authorities, but this did not involve the definition of the terms of reference of the Party organizations as distinct from those of the government... In face of the extremely strenuous and complicated task of socialist construction, overcentralization of power is becoming more and more incompatible with the development of our socialist cause. Protracted failure to adequately understand this was one important cause of the "cultural revolution", for which we paid a high price. There should be no further delay in finding a solution to this problem."

The Chinese had discovered that "power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely". There was also the realization that a separation of Party and governmental affairs was necessary to improve the state's performance. It would allow the government to accomplish the complicated tasks of socialist construction. This implies that the expertise of an administrative apparatus is essential to the nation's modernization. Thanks to its knowledge and competence, bureaucracy, even if an evil, is necessary. It also implies that policy implementation, to be successful, must be undertaken by a competent bureaucracy. Finally, an overconcentration of power, excessive emphasis on the Party's need for centralization, and inordinate control of the executives were seen as serious problems.

Several factors explain Deng's concern with the creation of "steady rule through professional bureaucracy, untainted by

"See Deng's speech, p.19

corruption and personal ties".¹⁴ His pragmatic philosophy -- "it doesn't matter whether a cat is black or white as long as it can catch mice" -- certainly plays an essential part in bringing about changes in China. Since Mao's crusade to transform the country primarily through ideological education and mass movement failed, Deng decided to mobilize the nation and bring it into the 20th century through bureaucratic management. His personal sufferings in the "Cultural Revolution" convinced him that there should be no more political campaigns when the Party often took over the role of administration and tried to achieve its goals by means of political mobilization. As the "No.2 capitalist roader" in the Party, Deng was paraded through the streets wearing a dunce cap. One of his sons was pushed from the four-story window of his student dormitory and is now crippled. The experience is bitter. The lesson is unforgettable.

More importantly, the "Cultural Revolution", after running for ten years, pushed the nation to the edge of collapse. The movement caused a serious economic crisis in China. Industrial and agricultural productivity was severely undermined. Science and technology were antiquated. The movement also occasioned social crisis. Many veteran cadres were labeled renegades, spies or capitalist-roaders.¹⁵ Intellectuals were denigrated. Millions of educated urban young people were sent to work in the countryside and mountain areas. "The society was embittered, exhausted and alienated".¹⁶ More dangerous still for the Chinese

¹⁴ Michel Oksenberg, "Economic Policy-making in China: Summer 1981", *The China Quarterly*, June 1982, No.90, p.171

¹⁵ persons in power taking the capitalist road

¹⁶ Donald S. Zogoria, "China's Quiet Revolution", *Foreign Affairs*,

leadership was the loss of popular confidence in the Party and a growing scepticism about the superiority of the socialist regime among the people. Realizing that political survival of the Party required drastic action, Deng and his associates "embarked on a series of radical reforms designed to raise the abysmally low standard of living, open safety valves for mass dissatisfaction, and gradually restore popular confidence in the ruling Party".⁵⁵

The separation of Party and governmental functions

Hua Guofeng's resignation from his post of premier in favour of Zhao Ziyang in September 1980 "represented the culmination of the general trend to ensure that leading Party and state posts were not held by the same person".⁵⁶ Zhao became well-known in the late 1970s largely because of his administrative skills as Governor of Sichuan, China's most populous province. Sichuan contains almost one hundred million people and is called the "Kingdom of Heaven". The turmoil of the "Cultural Revolution", however, resulted in death, disorder and starvation there. Zhao's assumption of office and his agricultural reforms helped restore the province's prosperity. It is widely acknowledged that Zhao's administrative skills and his achievements in developing Sichuan pushed him to the apex of China's administration. If he could successfully manage a province of one hundred million people,

⁵⁵ (cont'd) Spring 1984, Vol. 62, No. 4, p. 881

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Tony Saich, *China: Politics and Government*, p. 224

then why not a country of one billion? Richard Nethercut described Zhao as a chief representative of government and economy.¹ Deng criticized Zhao for being a "goody-goody" (haohao xiansheng),² who inclines towards not offending anybody. Quite possibly, Zhao immerses himself in quiet administrative work instead of being engaged in clamorous ideological disputes and strives for economical results instead of fussing about theoretical purity. Both comments suggest that Zhao is more a technocrat-administrator than a politician. His appointment marks the rise of the bureaucracy, which was considered "an important locus of revisionism in a socialist society"³ in the "Cultural Revolution".

Before Deng's "reform" speech there were many signs of change. The people's governments were reestablished at the provincial level. As well, the practice of having the Party's first secretaries also serving as heads of governments was abandoned. "In every instance a person other than the Party first secretary was elected to the governor's post, mayor's post, and so on,...".⁴ Changes extended beyond the separation of the Party and government in the ensuing years. For example, some of the governors and vice-governors are now specialists in particular areas. The Governor of Hubei Province was formerly Director of the Provincial People's Bank. The Mayor of Shanghai City, a provincial equivalent, is a prestigious industrial expert inside the Party.⁵ Non-Communists

¹ Richard D. Nethercut, *Problems of Communism*, March/April 1983, p.36

² Luo Bing, "A Bitter Struggle in Zhongnanhai", *Cheng Ming*, February 1984, p.7

³ Harry Harding, *Organizing China: The Problem of Bureaucracy 1949-1976* p.263

⁴ Tony Saich, *China: Politics and Government*, p.94

⁵ *Ming Pao*, March 30, 1983

were elected to leading positions in provincial governments. Yao Jun, elected in April 1983 to the post of Vice-Mayor of Tianjin City, was once associate general engineer and vice-manager of the municipal chemical industry corporation.⁶⁶ Xu Qichao, with a Master's degree in mechanical technology from the United States, formerly vice-director of the bureau of provincial mechanical industry in Province Zhejiang, is now in charge of industry and transportation as Vice-Governor.⁶⁷ An Zhendong, an engineer, after spending more than five years in prison as a "historical counterrevolutionary", is now Vice-Governor of Heilungjiang Province.⁶⁸ Before the "Cultural Revolution", non-Communist governors or vice-governors existed in some of the provinces. As leading members of the small "democratic parties", they were appointed out of necessity, rather than a commitment to expertise. In contrast, the newly-elected high-ranking non-Communist administrators not only take office but also enjoy the power associated with it. To a great extent, their skills and expertise are indispensable in modern construction. The scenes reminded people of a picture of future public service, drawn by two scholars ten-odd years ago. Portraying the ideal administrator, Marshal E. Dimock and Gladys O. Dimock predicted that "the public administrator of the future will be primarily a technocrat", "equipped with a specialized competence".⁶⁹ The changes also revived in China one of the essential principles of Weber's model

⁶⁶ *Renmin Ribao*, August 20, 1983

⁶⁷ *Renmin Ribao*, January 13, 1984

⁶⁸ *Renmin Ribao*, January 4, 1984

⁶⁹ Marshall Edward Dimock & Gladys Ogden Dimock, *Public Administration*, fourth edition, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1969) p.604

of bureaucracy -- "officials selected and placed on the basis of technical competence, not considerations such as social status, political affiliations".⁷⁰

The rise of the bureaucracy has altered in turn the relationships between both Party and government and Communist and non-Communist administrators. In China, the implementation of a superior's orders were often in doubt, since the superior might be a non-Communist giving instructions to a Communist subordinate. An episode illustrative of the change occurred in Nanjing, the capital city of Jiangsu Province. A director of a bureau challenged the authority of Vice-Mayor, a non-Communist, by saying: "I represent the Party, but whom does he represent?" The case was brought to the provincial government and solved there with the Governor's verdict: "The Vice-Mayor was elected by 3.6 million residents of the city and certainly represents the people of Nanjing." However, the change is likely to entail pain and sacrifice. So, the Vice-Mayor, who, although determined to devote himself to the nation, had to be prepared to lose his job.⁷¹ The process of staffing bureaucracy based more on technical competence than on political loyalty occasioned other problems. With more and more non-Communist intellectuals being promoted to leading positions in administration, their complaints not only divulged phenomena such as Party members' "administering state affairs behind a bamboo screen"(chuilian tingzheng) and non-Communist administrators'

⁷⁰Felix A. Nigro & Lloyd G. Nigro, *Modern Public Administration*, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980) p.124. See also H. H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946) pp.196-239

⁷¹*Renmin Ribao*, March 13, 1983

enjoying titles but no power. The critiques also led to the other direction -- these non-Communist administrators were often engaged in an occupation having nothing to do with their speciality.⁷³ Though either of these developments would impair the building-up of an efficient bureaucratic machinery, it is unlikely that the syndromes will disappear soon, because Party membership remains an important, although not officially necessary, qualification for public administrators.

The reforms also involved other efforts to strengthen the administrative apparatus. Party members in bureaucratic hierarchy were encouraged to acquire the knowledge required by the "four modernizations". Not only non-Communist intellectuals within the bureaucracy but also college students, the future bureaucrats, were recruited into the Party. As James Townsend suggests, these changes point to the creation of a new 'technocratic elite'.⁷⁴

At a mass rally held by the Central Committee of the CCP in 1983, Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang "stressed the role of knowledge and intellectuals".⁷⁵ As Hu states, in order to meet the urgent needs of expanding our socialist modernization, one must not only establish the correct concept of "valuing scientific and general knowledge" and that "of intellectuals as a part of the working class", but also:

implant the correct concept that all
leading personnel must strive to be

⁷³ *Renmin Ribao*, May 19, 1984

⁷⁴ James Townsend, "Political Institutions", in Joyce K. Kallgren(ed.), *The People's Republic of China After Thirty Years: An Overview*, (University of California, Berkeley, 1979) p.23

⁷⁵ *Ming Pao*, March 22, 1983

experts [and] ensure that our cadres become better educated and more professionally competent on the basis of becoming more revolutionary-minded."³

Modernization is one of the driving forces in bringing about the rise of the bureaucracy. Conversely, the strengthening of bureaucracy requires constant attention to the generation of expertise. The creation of "think tanks" is one way to meet this challenge. Fang Yi, a member of the State Council in charge of science and technology, noted that policy-making now involves expert knowledge in various fields and necessitates the generation of great amounts of data. Leaders, he felt, could not survive without "think tanks."⁴ The provincial government of Liaoning established five research centers including those for technical economy, economics, and rural development. As "think tanks", these institutions study the feasibility of various political and economic strategies proposed by the provincial government. They carry out short- and long-term research on economic development issues. They also provide information and advice in fields such as finance, tax, production and management."⁵ The municipal government of Beijing decided that specialists in various fields be invited as scientific advisors to assist the government in solving urgent problems encountered in the construction of the nation's capital. More than 170 specialists have been invited since 1979."⁶ Seminars were offered in order to improve administrative skills of leading

³ *Beijing Review*, Vol.26, No.12, March 21, 1983, p.6

⁴ *Renmin Ribao*, May 13, 1983

⁵ *Ming Pao*, September 12, 1983

⁶ *Renmin Ribao*, September 23, 1983

cadres. A seminar entitled "Science of Leadership and Decision-making" was recently sponsored by the provincial government in Anhui. Topics discussed included: "Intelligence Investment and Talent Education", "Prediction and Decision-making" and "Current Situation and Tendency of Management", etc.⁷⁷ The opening of the unprecedented research class for mayors and vice-mayors of the nation's 242 cities on October 5, 1983 demonstrated the top leaders' admission of their administrators' inadequate performance, especially in technical and managerial terms. It also indicated the top leaders' determination to better the skills and broaden the knowledge of their administrators. Sixty mayors or vice-mayors attended the first term and took courses on such topics as national administration, efficiency, leadership, think tanks and decision-making, municipal planning and municipal construction.⁷⁸ The training of management personnel was so compelling that it went beyond the nation's boundaries and gave birth to the National Center for Industrial Science and Technology Management Development at Dalian -- a joint Sino-U.S. project aimed at introducing Western management techniques to Chinese officials. In three years of operation, the center has graduated 750 students. Most of them are factory directors or managers. A graduate class for senior administrators was scheduled for April 1984. Its students will include chairmen of economic planning committees in municipal and provincial governments and officials at the bureau level from industrial ministries of the Central Government.⁷⁹ A new

⁷⁷ *Renmin Ribao*, November 2, 1983

⁷⁸ *Ming Pao*, August 23, 1983

⁷⁹ *Ming Pao*, August 29, 1983

generation of bureaucrats with adequate administrative capabilities and technical expertise is emerging.

The reforms have been carried out at the senior levels of government and the grassroots. People's communes have served as local governments at the grassroots level since 1958 when the Politburo adopted a resolution on their establishment. As a new form of organization, they originally "grew out of *ad hoc* decisions"²² and were swiftly copied throughout the country in only a couple of months. Yet it took more than twenty years to admit officially the fundamental weaknesses of the fusion of Party and government and that proper and efficient administrative organs must be created.²³ It is stated that township governments are restored to separate government administration from commune management and to terminate the 25-year-long practice that "the Party does not take care of Party affairs, the government does not perform governmental responsibilities, and government administration is not separated from enterprise management"²⁴ under the people's commune system. One of the gravest disadvantages of that system is that people's communes, as governments at the grassroots level, have not been able to function properly. Engaged in agricultural and industrial production, they also have to take charge of such work as Party and military affairs, trade, education, health, social welfare, public security, tax collection, grain procurement etc.²⁵ As

²² Harry Harding, *Organizing China: The Problem of Bureaucracy 1949-1976*, p.179

²³ *Renmin Ribao*, November 7, 1983

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Officially a people's commune is an organization "where industry (the worker), agriculture (the peasant), exchange (the trader), culture

institutions of "three-in-one"(combining Party, administrative and economic organizations together), people's communes have often been submerged in complicated and arduous production at the expense of administration.

It would be wrong to assert that the changes embody a restoration of pre-1958 status quo. Since the reestablishment of township governments, their staffing has undergone a radical alteration. The leaders of township governments are now recruited on contract basis instead of being appointed and thereafter holding a "iron rice bowl"*** for good. Only those who demonstrate satisfactory performance during their tenure may renew the contract. Though it still takes time to find out in what sense the change was called "a step worth cheering",** it might, however, be important in the future. The period of assuming public office despite necessary knowledge might be coming to an end. Will the approach be extended to higher levels of government? While it is difficult to predict, one message is that recruitment of government officials is likely to be based on competence and ability rather than revolutionary experience alone.

The third rise of bureaucracy in China

** (cont'd) and education (the student) and military affairs (the militiaman) merge into one". See "Central Committee Decision on People's Communes, August 29, 1958", in Harold C. Hinton (ed.), *Government and Politics in Revolutionary China: Selected Documents, 1949-1979*, (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1982) p.89

*** "Iron rice-bowl" alludes to the jobs provided by the state. Once you are employed, a life-long job is guaranteed. Once you become a cadre, you can only be promoted if no serious error is made.

** *Renmin Ribao*, May 25, 1984

Ferrel Heady noticed the rise and fall of bureaucratic power since the founding of the PRC. He saw peaks in the mid-1950s and early 1960s. He also saw "another resurgence which seems to have increased substantially since Mao's death".¹¹ To be more exact, the rebirth occurred, not immediately after Mao's death in September 1976, but after Deng's revival at the Third Plenum of the CPC Central Committee in December 1978. As Oksenberg and Bush correctly point out,

Both in China and abroad, the Third Plenum is now regarded as the crucial watershed of the post-Mao era. It was at that session (and the central work conference preceding it) that Deng Xiaoping unquestionably gained the upper hand in China's leadership.¹²

Deng, the main architect and advocate of the reforms, now has a free hand in pushing the movement. But Deng's reforms differ from previous eras of bureaucratic change. The reform efforts in the past were short-lived because of "a protracted failure to adequately understand" the issue and the resultant de-emphasis of the administrative apparatus by the Party. As was fully reflected in Liu Shaoqi's declaration, it was perfectly proper to "mix the Party with the government".¹³ The current resurgence of the bureaucracy, however, seems quite promising thanks to Deng's comprehension of the situation and his strong support of the

¹¹Ferrel Heady, *Public Administration: A Comparative Perspective*, p.375

¹²Michel Oksenberg and Richard Bush, *Problems of Communism*, September/October 1982, No.5, p.8

¹³Harry Harding, *Organizing China: Problem of Bureaucracy 1949-1976*, p.187

reforms.

As the bureaucracy gains power, problems of bureaupathology must be addressed. To cure the bureaucracy of various maladies demands not only verbal criticism, but also analysis of the bureaucratic structure, which would be achieved on the basis of study of science. Decades of misleading concepts of science combined with ten years' turmoil have left their stamp. It takes too long for the authorities to realize the significance of, first, applied science and natural science, and then management and social sciences. The call for the study of social science in 1983 by Xiang Nan," the Party First Secretary of Fujian Province, sounded only like a faint and far cry. Political science and public administration do not yet receive the attention they deserve. For most people it is likely that political science means only Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought. While people are familiar with the names of Karl Marx or Friedrich Engels, Max Weber and Robert Michels are unknown. Certainly insufficient study of bureaucracy from various perspectives of social and political sciences will deal a negative impact on healthy growth of an administrative apparatus.

In the early days of the reforms when people already saw the rise of the bureaucracy, many of them were unsure whether such a resurgence would be as short-lived as the previous ones. As the movement progresses, it becomes clear that the bureaucracy, armed with expertise indispensable for modernization, will continue to play an important role in the nation's development. Deng's

"Ming Pao, September 28, 1983

pragmatic philosophy impelled him to deviate from Mao's policies of contempt for knowledge and administrative machinery. The "Cultural Revolution" resulted in a national disaster. Only radical and resolute measures could stop the further deterioration of the nation's plight. One of them, as Deng sees, is to reestablish an efficient administrative apparatus based on competence rather than political affinity. Hence the third rise of the bureaucracy in China and the emergence of a technocratic elite there.

IV. Decentralization

Centralization in the first years of the PRC

The public administration of the PRC had taken the direction of centralization before the Gengshen Reforms. Most of the time the central authorities of the People's Republic were working towards a centralized and unified administrative apparatus. There were several periods of decentralization. They were, however, generally short-lived. A major decentralization of administrative structures was possible only after Deng's call for the reform of system of Party and State leadership.

When Mao Zedong announced the birth of the PRC on October 1, 1949, the administrative machinery he helped establish was fairly decentralized. Six Administrative Areas were created under the Central Government -- Northeast, North, East, Central-South, Northwest and Southwest China. Such decentralization reflects the nation's vastness and its economic and political diversities. The Northeast and Shanghai and its environs were economically developed. But the rest of the country, especially the Northwest and the Southwest, was backward. In "old liberated areas" (mainly rural), the Communist-led governments had been in power for several years. In other areas, however, the newly established regime faced such problems as fighting against foreign influences primarily in big cities, pursuing remnant Nationalist forces, and carrying out land reform. Put differently, the government's principal task in some regions was the promotion of production,

while elsewhere it was preoccupied with the consolidation of power. These factors, combined with underdeveloped transportation and communications, made some form of administrative decentralization necessary. Accordingly, six administrative areas which "tended to develop a degree of local autonomy, initiating some local policies and interpreting central directives to suit their own conditions",¹² were employed.

The autonomy of the six areas should not be overestimated. A degree of local autonomy meant only "leeway in adjusting policies" set by the Central Government "to meet local conditions, determining the pace at which they would be carried out, and supplementing them with programs designed to solve special local problems".¹³ The Party's philosophy of democratic centralism, the experience of centralization in Soviet Union and China's historical tradition of having a strong central government would point in centripetal rather than centrifugal direction. The abovementioned arrangement in the early years of the PRC was "an attempt on the part of the new regime to adapt to diverse local conditions while simultaneously maintaining effective central control".¹⁴ Unity and centralization, not their opposites, were the dominant themes in China.

Even the limited autonomy of the Great Administrative Areas was short-lived. For it became incompatible with ideas of the leaders in Peking for several reasons. Most importantly, the regional

¹²Derek J. Waller, *The Government and Politics of the People's Republic of China*, (London: Hutchinson, 1981) p.90

¹³Harry Harding, *Organizing China: The Problem of Bureaucracy 1949-1976*, p.67

¹⁴Ibid.

governments were a threat to the Central Government. Increasing independence, backed up by the political, economic and military strength at their disposal became a menace to national unity. China's history witnessed once and again how autonomy and independence of local administration gradually developed into segmentation of a country by rival warlords. The rebellion of An Lushan(A.D. 755-763) in the Tang dynasty(A.D. 618-907) was caused by the Central Government's giving him "complete powers to deal with a local crisis" and making him "in complete charge of the local military forces, the financial administration, and even the appointment of all local officials".¹ In the early 1950s two high-ranking officials Gao Gang and Rao Shushi, in charge of the Northeast (the heavy-industrial region) and East China (the main light-industrial area) respectively, were accused of establishing "the independent kingdom" and engaging "in conspiratorial activities aimed at seizing power of leadership of the Party and the State" at the 4th plenary session of the 7th Central committee in February 1954.² Also involved in the Gao-Rao affair were such factors as "policy difference with leaders in the central government"³ or Mao's intention to take advantage of conflicts between Gao Gang and Liu Shaoqi (both Mao's potential successors) to achieve his own goals.⁴ However, "whatever its cause, the

¹Ch'ien Mu, *Traditional Government in Imperial China: A Critical Analysis*, p.47

²"Resolution on the Kao Kang-Jao Shu-shih Anti-Party Alliance, 31 March 1955", in Harold C. Hinton(ed.), *Government & Politics in Revolutionary China: Selected Documents, 1949-1979*, p.21

³Harry Harding, *Organizing China: The Problem of Bureaucracy 1949-1976*, p.68

⁴Du Feng, "The Riddle About Gao Gang in 'Selected Writings of Deng Xiaoping'", *Cheng Ming*, September 1983, p.58

Kao-Jao affair illustrated the danger that ambitious regional leaders might decide to challenge the authority of the Party center".^{''} Their expulsion from the Party was thus regarded as "one of the main events in a drastic curbing of regional power" in the early years of the PRC.^{'''}

Gao and Rao's fall was followed by the abolition of the Great Administrative Areas in June 1954. In turn, the breaking up of these regional centers of power resulted in the "strengthening of the concentrated and unified leadership of the central government".^{'''} The abolition of regional governments was thus prompted by political concerns, not any theory of planned economic development, although the official explanation stresses the latter motivations.

The first Constitution of the PRC, adopted three months later by the First Session of the First National People's Congress, demonstrated that the leaders of the Central Government sought a centralized state and extensive control over both state and local affairs. As Franklin Houn says,

Not only do the central legislature and executive organs have broad powers of revision and nullification over the enactments and orders of local authorities, but also the principle of centralization applied likewise in the judicial fields. Furthermore, the hierarchy of procuratorates,

^{''}Harry Harding, *Organizing China: The Problem of Bureaucracy 1949-1976*, p.68

^{'''}Editor's notes to "Resolution on the Kao Kang-Jao Shu-shih Anti-Party Alliance, 31 March 1955", in Harold C. Hinton (ed.), *Government & Politics in Revolutionary China: Selected Documents, 1949-1979*, p.21

^{'''}Harry Harding, *Organizing China: The Problem of Bureaucracy 1949-1976*, p.69

with the Supreme People's Procuratorate at the top, is another instrument ensuring centralization of power and preventing any particularistic tendencies from impeding central objectives. Nowhere does the constitution provide for any genuine local self-government: for even in the case of the autonomous regions, local liberties are not fixed and unalterable, but must yield to the central authority. With the development of centralized economic planning, which has under way since 1953, and the highly centralized function of the Communist Party policy and ideology, the political direction in Communist China can only be expected to become increasingly centralized.¹⁰²

With the abolition of the six Great Administrative Areas, all provincial governments were put under direct supervision of the Central Government. They enjoyed fewer powers and managed a smaller jurisdiction with a smaller population. It was difficult for them to challenge the authorities in Peking and threaten national unity. Undoubtedly, the new Constitution "illustrates its framers' determination to concentrate power in Peking and prevent real decentralization of authority".¹⁰³

Decentralization of 1957-1958

The first Constitution established a centralized administration. But some decentralization was necessary for several reasons. It was partially dictated by the inability of the central agencies to handle all economic problems across the country and the related incapacity of the local authorities to adjust central directives to local conditions. It was also caused by the

¹⁰²Franklin W. Houn, "Communist China's New Constitution" in George P. Jan(ed.), *Government of Communist China*, p.247-8

¹⁰³Ibid., p.249

events in the Soviet Union where Stalin's centralization of decision-making system was condemned. Such factors prompted Mao to deliver in April 1956 a speech entitled "On the Ten Great Relationships", one of these being the relationship between the Center and the regions. Mao states:

at present we must consider the development of local enthusiasm and let the regions do more work under the unified plan of the center. ... it is necessary to expand the power of the regions. It is detrimental to socialist construction if regional power is too small. Our constitution bestows no legislative power to the region; all legislation is done by the National People's Congress. However, in conformity with the policies of the Center, and within the law, the region can make rules and regulations according to the requirements of its work and local conditions. ... To summarize, the region must have adequate power and this is helpful to building a strong socialist country. I am afraid that it is harmful to reduce the power of the region too much.¹⁰⁴

In September 1957, at the Third Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee of the CCP, a policy of decentralization was advanced. The decentralization reforms resulted in: 1. provincial control of much of light industry and some less important factories within the heavy industry; 2. the delegation of more authority to the provinces over allocation of materials to plants within their jurisdictions; 3. the right of the local authorities to set additional "nonflexible" production targets.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Mao tse-tung, "On the Ten Great Relationships", in Harold C. Hinton (ed.), *Government & Politics in Revolutionary China: Selected Documents, 1949-1979*, p.36-7

¹⁰⁵ Harry Harding, *Organizing China: The Problem of Bureaucracy*

1958 witnessed further decentralization. Cultural and educational institutions went into the hands of the provinces. Not only was "ownership" of some of them transferred from the Center to the provinces, it was even passed down to the municipalities. Moreover, the authority enjoyed by the provinces over resource allocation created troubles for the central ministries which tried to coordinate economic activities in different provinces. As a result, "the center's effective control over the economy was substantially reduced".¹⁰⁰

Recentralization in the early 1960s

The decentralization reforms were concurrent with the Great Leap Forward Movement, when local enthusiasm and initiatives were much encouraged. Together with the failure of this movement, the process of decentralization came to an end. The Ninth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the CCP held in January 1961 decided to reestablish the six regional Party bureaus which had been abolished in 1954, "to act for the Central Committee in strengthening leadership over the Party committees in various provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions".¹⁰¹ The implementation of the policy of "readjustment, consolidation, filling out, and raising standards" (the eight-character policy) reversed most of the decentralizing initiatives of the Great

¹⁰⁰ (cont'd) 1949-1976, p. 113

¹⁰¹ *Idid.*, p. 181

¹⁰² "Communique of the Ninth Plenary Session of the Eighth Communist Party of China Central Committee, 20 January 1961", in Harold C. Hinton (ed.), *Government & Politics in Revolutionary China: Selected Documents, 1949-1979*, p. 119

Leap Forward. They brought the provinces under tight central control. To exercise more control over national economy, certain central ministries were reestablished. To gain jurisdiction over factories and enterprises that had passed to the hands of the provinces, state corporations were set up. However, "these changes did not ... undo all of the organizational reforms of 1957 1958".¹⁰⁰ For one thing, the six regional bureaus were not as powerful as they once were. Moreover, the provinces retained their control over most of industry. Third, decision-making power was shared between central and provincial officials.¹⁰¹

Even so, the reestablishment of the regional bureaus aroused Mao's concern and was one of his main targets during the Cultural Revolution.¹⁰² He was much worried about any sort of challenge to his status, once regarded as paramount. The fact that "the eight-character policy" was an impressive success enhanced the position of those associated with the achievement, while at the same time breaking the myth that Mao was always correct. The divergence in policies as well as concern with the fading of his influence on Party and State affairs finally impelled Mao to launch the "Cultural Revolution".

Decentralization in the "Cultural Revolution"

The period of the "Cultural Revolution" is widely accepted as one of decentralization. The regional Party bureaus, established

¹⁰⁰Harry Harding, *Organizing China: The Problem of Bureaucracy 1949-1976*, p.186

¹⁰¹Ibid., p.187

¹⁰²Editor's notes to "Communique of the Ninth Plenary Session of the Eighth Communist Party of China Central Committee, 20 January 1961", in Harold C. Hinton(ed.), *Government & Politics in Revolutionary China: Selected Documents, 1949-1979*, p.117

to strengthen central control over the provinces, once again disappeared. It is also true that state corporations were dismantled, and that planning, instead of proceeding from the top down, moved from the bottom up.¹¹¹ However, two other factors must be taken into account during the period. First, the activities of Red Guards and Revolutionary Rebels greatly paralyzed the administrative apparatus at various levels, rendering central control very difficult. This kind of decentralization was more a result of anarchy than a set goal predetermined by Mao. Second, although Mao proposed that the decentralization measures undertaken in 1957 and 1958 be reinstated,¹¹² it remains an open question what he sought to achieve. Mao criticized Deng when he argued that:

All these things should really have been discussed at the Center before decisions were taken. Teng Hsiao-ping never came to consult me; from 1959 to the present he never consulted me over anything at all. ... I don't like being treated as a dead ancestor.¹¹³

These words were probably motivated by Mao's concern that "supreme power may slip from his hands", not any determination to restore decentralization. Nonetheless, decentralization would be a handy weapon in Mao's arsenal, one used to "bombard the headquarters"

¹¹¹Harry Harding, *Organizing China: The Problem of Bureaucracy 1949-1976*, p.290-1

¹¹²Ibid., p.289

¹¹³Mao Zedong, "Talk at the Report Meeting, 24 October 1966", in Stuart Schram(ed.), *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed: Talks and Letters 1956-71*, (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1974) p.266-7

which Mao felt unable to influence effectively.

The "Cultural Revolution" curtailed some efforts at central economic management and reduced the number of the central ministries. But many of the period's "new emerging things", including "the merger of the Party and State bureaucracies" and "the decentralization of economic management", were soon discarded.¹¹⁴ Officials had a lingering fear that they could be blamed for establishing their own "independent kingdom" as Peng Zhen was attacked at the beginning of the "Cultural Revolution" for his "ironclad and impenetratable" control over Peking.¹¹⁵ Qin Shihuang, who founded the first truly unified and centralized government in Chinese history in 221 B.C., had long been condemned for his "burning books and burying scholars alive". But Mao repeatedly praised him by stressing the latter's contribution to the unification of China in history. The underlying implication is clear -- a centralized administration would be in the Chinese tradition.

Decentralization after the "Cultural Revolution"

After the "Cultural Revolution", the most important experiment with decentralization occurred in Southern China. The Central Government returned more financial and budgetary authority to two provinces there -- Guangdong and Fujian -- because of their unique characteristics. Both provinces have excellent natural harbours

¹¹⁴ Harry Harding, *Organizing China: The Problem of Bureaucracy 1949-1976*, p.294-5

¹¹⁵ "On the Reorganization of the Peking Municipal Party Committee, 4 June 1966", in Harold C. Hinton (ed.), *Government & Politics in Revolutionary China: Selected Documents, 1949-1979*, p.231

which are vital for foreign trade. Both have extensive ties with the external world. Long traditions of commercial and cultural exchanges with overseas countries have exposed their people to changes and developments abroad. Most families have relatives or friends in other countries. These overseas Chinese go back and visit China often bringing their experiences from elsewhere. Consequently Guangdong and Fujian Provinces are more cosmopolitan than the other Chinese provinces.

To take advantage of the unusual features of these provinces, the Central Government laid down the principle of "specific policies and flexible measures" for the two provinces' administrative activities. With more delegated power, it was easier for them to absorb foreign investment and to benefit from foreign technology. Instead of having papers travelling slowly up to the Center to receive approval from officials there, many projects of cooperation with foreign businessmen, overseas Chinese, and compatriots in Hong Kong and Macao were now undertaken by the provincial governments. The achievements were impressive. As the Governor of Guangdong Province said at the first meeting of the Sixth Provincial People's Congress, implementation of such a principle "has brought about a series of fundamental changes in provincial economy".¹¹⁴ In the period 1979-1983 the total value of provincial industrial and agricultural output increased at the annual rate of 8.5 per cent. The accumulated total of foreign currency income of the province was added up by US\$ 4.5 billion. The provincial turnover of consumer

¹¹⁴ *Renmin Ribao*, April 4, 1983

goods from retail trade showed an average annual increase of 18.1 per cent.''' What is more important is that the experiment with "special economic zones" proved successful.

Special economic zones

Four special economic zones have been set up by the Chinese Government. They are located in the cities of Shenzhen, Zhuhai, and Shantou of Guangdong Province and the city of Xiamen in Fujian. In August 1980 Shenzhen became the first special economic zone. This zone, adjacent to Hong Kong, covers an area of 327.5 square kilometres. Its four year history indicates that the establishment of special economic zones is significant for four modernizations in China. After its founding, the Shenzhen special zone has concluded more than 2,500 agreements with foreign businessmen. The total investment amounts to US\$ 1.8 billion, of which US\$ 400 million have already been put to use. More than 25 thousand pieces (sets) of equipments were imported. Total industrial output increased 10.7 times between 1978 and 1983; the financial revenue 10.9 times; and local income in foreign exchange two times. Shenzhen has developed from a small town of approximately thirty thousand into a city of three hundred thousand.'''

Gu Mu, a member of State Council in charge of special economic zones, said that the special zones were unique because of the implementation of innovative economic policies and systems of economic management. To be more concrete, the special features

'''Ibid.

'''Renmin Ribao, March 29, 1984

could be largely delineated as follows: 1. The economic development predominantly depends on absorbing and utilizing foreign investment; 2. The economic activities are regulated according to market demands; 3. In entry and exit procedures and customs duties, foreign investors are granted preferential treatment; 4. Special economic zones practise a managerial system different from the rest of the country, and enjoy more autonomy.'''

The rapid economic development of Shenzhen has been ascribed to its greater autonomy, as was explained by Qian Jiaju, a well-known Chinese economist and a member of Standing Committee of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference(CPPCC).¹²⁰ The Shekou industrial area could serve as an example. It is part of Shenzhen special zone and covers an area of 2.14 square kilometres. Construction there has been placed under the administration of the China Commercial Shipping Corporation of the Ministry of Communications, but the corporation has been accorded considerable management autonomy. As a member of the Ministry of Communications put it, in developing the Shekou industrial area the China Commercial Shipping Corporation has the right to make decisions on blueprinting, planning, project surveying, fund raising, project bidding, negotiating and conducting agreements with foreign businessmen, and importing investment and advanced technique from abroad.¹²¹ As a result, the administrative committee of the Shekou industrial area has become the authority in directing production and construction of the whole area. It can strike

¹¹⁹ *Renmin Ribao*, April 23, 1984

¹²⁰ *Renmin Ribao*, May 23, 1984

¹²¹ *Renmin Ribao*, May 28, 1984

bargains on its own according to the special policies and demands of enterprises, without wasting time and energy on seeking approval from each level of the bureaucratic hierarchy. The thirteen corporations in the industrial area also enjoy similar autonomy. They are not required to report details, be they major or minor, to a higher body for endorsement.¹²² All of them have been delegated power over personnel, finance and management.¹²³ Xili Hu (West Beauty Lake) Vacation Village in Shenzhen is another good example. An investigative report concluded that the success of that tourist center originates from delegating power to enterprises. Xili Hu Vacation Village has been granted the following powers: 1. The power to make decisions on its future development. Major projects must still be reported to the superior body, but minor ones can be hammered out autonomously; 2. The power of finance. No tax to be levied for the first five years. The profit can be used for further development of tourism, for improving employees' welfare, pay and bonus; 3. The power of personnel. The enterprise has the right to hire and to fire, to award and to penalize its employees. Recruitment on the basis of competence has thus broken the old system of "eating from big public pot" and "iron rice-bowl".¹²⁴

Actually the impact of establishing special economic zones has gone beyond their boundaries. In April 1984 the municipal

¹²² *Renmin Ribao*, April 2, 1984

¹²³ *Guangming Ribao*, April 21, 1984

¹²⁴ *Renmin Ribao*, June 11, 1984. "Eating from big public pot" and "iron rice-bowl" are two popular metaphors for absolute egalitarianism in China. Everyone there receives a fixed wage from the government, regardless of work performance. Hard workers get the same as lazybones. Both of them "eat from big public pot". For "iron rice-bowl" see footnote on p.38

government of Fuzhou, the capital city of Fujian Province, delegated power to state-owned industrial and communication enterprises. As a result enterprises have gained the right to appoint and to remove their middle-level administrative personnel, to recruit or to dismiss contract workers by means of assessment of technical proficiency, to transfer in or out cadres, technicians, or workers, and to implement different forms of wage system including floating salary and bonus.¹²⁵ In the following month all the state-owned industrial enterprises were granted expanded powers by the Central Government. On May 10th the State Council issued "Provisional Regulations on Greater Freedom for State-owned Industrial Enterprises". The new regulations give the enterprises:

1. The right to produce whatever is needed or is in short supply after fulfilling State plans and orders;
2. With certain exceptions, the right to sell their own trial-produced or overstocked products and those refused by State purchasing departments;
3. For means of production that they sell themselves and after fulfilling State plans and orders, the right to set prices within a 20 percent range of the price by the State, or to negotiate the prices with the buyers;
4. The right to obtain raw materials directly from producers without going through State monopoly suppliers;
5. The right to decide whether their share of income goes into production expansion, trial production of new products, the reserve funds, workers' welfare, or bonus;
6. The right to lease or rent out unneeded machinery or other fixed assets;
7. the right to organize their operations and assign their staffs according to need as

¹²⁵Renmin Ribao , April 28, 1984

long as they stay within their authorized size;

8. The right of the factory director to appoint or dismiss cadres under him; his deputies, however, are subject to approval from above;
9. The right to recruit technicians and managerial personnel directly and to hire workers on the basis of examinations;
10. The right to adopt any wage system in line with State standards;
11. The right to enter into joint projects that cut across official divisions so long as enterprises maintain their present system of ownership, finances and subordinate relationship.¹²

But the most conspicuous effort to extend further the experiences obtained in special economic zones was the decision to open fourteen coastal cities and to grant expanded power to the local governments there.

Fourteen open coastal cities

From January 24 to January 29, 1984 Deng inspected two of the four special economic zones in Shenzhen and Zhuhai and wrote an inscription which reads: "The development and experience in Shenzhen has proven that our policy of establishing special economic zones is correct". Shortly after that, in late March and early April the Secretariat of the CCP Central Committee and the State Council jointly convened a 12-day symposium, which suggested that fourteen coastal cities be open to the outside world.¹³ At

¹² 'Renmin Ribao', May 12, 1984. See also *China Daily*, May 15, 1984. The decision was also made on the basis of experimentation in granting extended autonomy to some enterprises, which started first in Sichuan Province in October 1978. In 1980 more than 6000 enterprises, namely 16 percent of the nation's state-owned enterprises, were involved in the operation. See *Beijing Review*, Vol.24, No.14, April 6, 1981. p.23

¹³ It was said that Deng intended to set up also special zones in the

the Second Session of the Sixth National People's Congress opened on May 15 Premier Zhao declared that:

Fourteen coastal cities -- Dalian, Qinhuangdao, Tianjin, Yantai, Qindao, Lianyungang, Nantong, Shanghai, Ningbo, Wenzhou, Fuzhou, Guangzhou, Zhanjiang and Beihai -- and the Hainan Island will be further open to the outside world. Certain special policies designed for the special economic zones will be applied there and their decision-making power extended.¹²

A closer look at these cities reveals the Government's determination to further decentralize its administration. Their population is more than 78 million and this comprises 7.7 per cent of China's total. The profits and taxes of their industry make up a quarter of the nation's total. The total volume of railway, road and water-borne freight handled by the 14 cities is 20 per cent of the country's total. Their harbours handle 97 per cent of all cargo. Scientists and technicians, universities and secondary technical schools in these cities constitute 12-17 per cent of the country's total.¹³ Clearly, these cities enjoy a better economic base, a higher managerial and technical level, as well as more developed science, culture and education. These favourable features make it possible for them not only to absorb foreign investment and to import advanced techniques,

¹² (cont'd) fourteen cities. But Chen Yun disagreed and proposed instead that eight cities be open. As a compromise, the outcome was to open fourteen coastal cities. See Luo Bin, "Differences between Chen Yun and Deng Xiaoping", *Cheng Ming*, No. 80, June 1984. p. 27

¹³ *Beijing Review*, Vol. 27, No. 21, May 21, 1984. P. 18

¹⁴ *Guangming Ribao*, June 11, 1984

but also to provide more evidence that the current policy of structural reforms and opening to the outside world is correct.

In fact both issues -- restructuring the administrative systems in various fields and opening to the outside world -- involve decentralization. Zhao avowed that the success of opening those coastal cities lies in attracting foreign business and its investment and in expanding administrative autonomy of local authorities.¹³⁰ Gu Mu stated that loosening policies in respect to foreign investment and expanding administrative autonomy of local authorities were aimed at better absorbing and utilizing foreign investment and technology.¹³¹

Decentralization may appear to serve the economic activities of foreign businessmen. But that is an incomplete understanding of delegation of power within the administrative hierarchy.

Decentralization of decision-making power contributes to the effective administration primarily because it makes possible more ways of adaptation to local conditions and needs. Such a flexibility should not confine itself merely to foreign trade. If administrative decentralization is necessary at the present stage of development in China, steps should be taken to delegate power to lower levels of bureaucracy not only regarding foreign trade or economic field but also in respect of culture, science, education and other fields.¹³² But opening the fourteen coastal cities has caused the impression that decentralization has more

¹³⁰"The Birth of a Important Policy", in *Liao Wang*, No.24, 1984

¹³¹*Renmin Ribao*, April 23, 1984

¹³²Some of the research institutes began to receive certain delegated power. The change, however, is minor in comparison with that in economic field.

to do with external economic activities. The concept was strengthened by an editorial in *Renmin Ribao* which claimed that the State decided to expand the administrative autonomy of these cities "so that they would be able to carry out external economic activities more vigorously".¹³³

The policy of opening the fourteen coastal cities was also aimed at forming a line along China's coast from North to South serving as the forward position for the country's opening to the outside world. These cities will allegedly accelerate the development of China's hinterland by means of financial support, material supply and intelligence transfer. The four modernizations were thereby promoted from East to West across the country. Since more administrative autonomy in these cities means more decision-making responsibilities for local officials, as well as less control over regional affairs by the Central Government, decentralization would be achieved at the expense of an effective central supervision. When the officials in these cities become more and more committed to the local development, the Central Government might have difficulties persuading them to contribute more to the prosperity of the rest of the country. Consequently, while it is certain that the success achieved in Shenzhen special economic zone results mainly from the policy of opening to the outside world and granting more autonomy to the local government, it still remains an unresolved question whether an identical policy applied to the newly-opened fourteen coastal cities would similarly promote economic development throughout the country.

¹³³*Renmin Ribao*, May 28, 1984



This issue is probably attracting the attention of central policy-makers. Soon after the opening of the coastal cities, the State Council decided to make Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei Province, an experimental base for comprehensive economic reforms.¹³⁴ Wuhan is located at the junction of the Beijing-Guangzhou railway line and the Yangtze River. Thanks to its favourable geography, the city, functioning as a relay station of North-South and East-West commodity circulation, once contained more than 2,000 wholesalers whose business covered many provinces. Overstrict management from both provincial and central government departments almost stifled the atmosphere required by such activities. With this in mind, the Central Government decided, on one hand, to grant the city economic management powers equal to those of province, and on the other, to order central departments to give it autonomy as soon as possible.¹³⁵ Since the implementation of the State Council decision is not to be completed until 1985, its full impact is unknown. Nonetheless, the idea of bringing into full play the role of center cities is likely to draw people's attention to another important but neglected issue of administrative decentralization -- the administration of counties by cities.

Cities administering counties

The PRC is organized into three levels of administration: province, county, and township. There are 30 administrative units at the provincial level and 2136 administrative units at the county

¹³⁴ *Renmin Ribao*, June 3, 1984

¹³⁵ *China Daily*, June 6, 1984

level. Between these two levels there is a prefectural level, which comprises 208 administrative units. They are all representative agencies of the provincial or autonomous region governments, with the exception of 30 autonomous prefectures which are the organs of state power.¹³⁶ But as Doak Barnett argues, their role "is not wholly clear and it seems to have varied from area to area and at different times".¹³⁷ Because of its representative feature, the prefectural administration is supposed to assist the provinces as a coordinating and supervising body. In particular, it is to relay decisions downward from provincial or autonomous region governments to county governments as well as to refer matters upward from county governments to provincial or autonomous region governments for examination and approval. Because of the lack of clarity of their role in practice, most prefectural administrative units have become "full-scale governments which ... have possessed virtually all the important administrative agencies found in governments at both the provincial and county levels".¹³⁸ This results in poor communication between governments at provincial level and those at the county level, causing unnecessary delay, and government expenditure. On the other hand, each of the prefectures could easily evolve into a place closed to interregional intercourse. Separation of rural and urban areas, repetition in production and clogging of circulation were thus created. Furthermore, because of the existence of prefectural administration any kind of

¹³⁶ *Beijing Review*, Vol.26, No.1, January 3, 1983, p.24

¹³⁷ A. Doak Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy and Political Power in Communist China*, p.115

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

coordination and cooperation among municipalities and counties within its jurisdiction must be conducted by the prefectural administration, rather than being initiated, planned and managed by the two involved parties. Cities and rural areas which have much to offer each other, yet at the same time need each other's help, could well coordinate their activities without prefectural interference.

From 1983 on, the administrative units at the prefectural and city levels in some economically developed areas have been merged. That year witnessed the abolition of 35 prefectures. As a result, more than 500 counties have been put under the administration of 100-odd cities across the country.¹³³ The merging of administrative units at the prefectural and city levels has resulted in a new system of "city administering counties",¹⁴⁰ under which the municipal governments have been granted more administrative authority. On April 1 Yongchuan Prefecture joined Chongqing City, making the latter the most populous as well as the largest administrative unit at the city level in China. With a total population of nearly 14 million, covering an area of more than 23,000 square kilometres, and administering 11 counties and a

¹³³ *Ming Pao*, March 2, 1984. See also *Renmin Ribao*, October 28, 1983 and January 20, 1984

¹⁴⁰ Doak Barnett wrote in 1967 that "Liaoning does not have any sort of intermediary level of administration between the provinces and the counties..., has abolished all such units, and has placed its counties directly under the supervision of the major municipalities in the province". See *Cadres, Bureaucracy and Political Power in Communist China*, p.116. Actually Liaoning began to practice the system of "city administering counties" in 1958, discontinued it and set prefectures in 1964, and then restored the system in 1968 with 12 out of its 45 counties still being administered by two prefectures. These two prefectures were finally abolished in 1984. See *Renmin Ribao*, February 1, 1983 and July 22, 1984

small city(Yongchuan), Chongqing has also been granted economic management power equal to that of a province.'¹¹

The new system of "city administering counties" attempts to end the separation of urban and rural areas and the regional blockade which were occasioned by the existence of prefectures. It is true that the merging of prefectural and municipal administration has resulted in more power for the cities. The municipal government can now directly deal with the surrounding counties and discuss the cooperation and coordination between them. However, other problems regarding urban-rural relations seem to be emerging. With the decision-making power now residing in municipal governments, it is possible that they will concern themselves more with the development of urban areas than with that of rural areas. Since the counties are placed under direct control and supervision of the cities, it could well be that the latter will take advantage of that position and extort more benefits from the former. The vast rural areas could be turned into a mere supply base providing raw materials for industrial production in the cities. The counties could be requested to send more food to improve the life in the urban areas. Cultivated lands could be requisitioned in order to build more municipally-run factories.'¹² In other words, the separation of urban and rural links under the old system of "prefecture administering counties" could be changed into a new, undesirable relationship between cities and counties -- a relationship of dependence, not of mutual cooperation and benefit. The original goal of making cities bring along counties,

¹¹Renmin Ribao, February 1, 1983

¹²Renmin Ribao, July 10, 1983

giving full play to strong points of both urban and rural areas and achieving thereby a new form of combination of urban and rural economies, could be missed.

Information available through Chinese news media, though limited, has discovered some means of guarding against these unwelcome tendencies appearing after cities obtain more delegated power. The Central Government seems to be in favour of Carl Friedrich's theory, which stresses heavily "the propensity of public officials to be self-directing and self-regulating".¹⁴³ When introducing the experiences in practicing the new system most articles emphasized its necessity and advantages but devoted few words to the potential problems. Even though the phenomenon of overstressing urban prosperity and ignoring rural development were mentioned, they would allegedly be eliminated by the fostering of "a correct understanding" of the new system of administration. Clearly, to find a better way to combine self-discipline with outside restraints in order to forestall officials' deviating from predetermined direction is still an issue for both scholars and practitioners to explore further.

On the other hand, it is reasonable to argue that economic activities organized by cities rather than prefectures would avoid the problem of regional blockade. The development of urban industry is to satisfy the needs of both particular cities and related regions. Consequently, maladies like being closed to interregional intercourse, which was generated under prefectural

¹⁴³ Kenneth Kernaghan, "Responsible Public Bureaucracy", in Kenneth Kernaghan(ed.), *Public Administration in Canada*, (Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1982) p.291

administration, will face difficulties.''' However, when prefectural administration is replaced by a municipal government having surrounding counties under its supervision, the problem of regional blockade could still emerge. The new jurisdiction could develop into a self-centered, closed setup. Under the new system, the city governments are empowered to organize and to coordinate economic activities within their their jurisdiction. Out of the unwillingness to cooperate with other regions, these new authorities could discontinue the collaborative relations with them, managing to manufacture all kinds of products, though it would be wise to import some of them.

Proposals were advanced to kill such disadvantages. A system of replacing profit delivery with tax payments has been promoted to further the exchange of commodities and to build a closer horizontal relationship among enterprises. Managers in enterprises aimed for greater profits rather than the fulfillment of State plans and orders. To avoid repetitions in production and construction, planning in each of the industries and each of the municipal governments should be well worked out and coordinated. The current statistical system takes into account the output value and benefits only when enterprises yield them at their sites. In other words, joint investment or integrated complex of enterprises with other regions is discouraged. Certainly, such a statistical system can only favour a sort of setup closed to interregional intercourse and cooperation and must be redesigned.'''

''Renmin Ribao, October 21, 1983

''Ibid.

As regional cooperation increases, it is still unclear how far the new municipal governments are willing to let the resulting interdependence develop. It is also uncertain how one can maintain effective central control over local governments and "coordinate all the activities of the nation like pieces in a chess game", while at the same time encouraging municipal authorities to build the new jurisdictions into "comprehensive regional economic unities".¹ Furthermore, it is not easy to keep profit-oriented local enterprises within the bounds of central plans. Only one point is certain: under the new system of "city administering counties" the separation of urban and rural links will be weakened, their relations will become closer and coordinated.

Economic zones

The process of administrative decentralization in China is proceeding according to the conception of "point -- line-- area". Special economic zones could be regarded as "points". Fourteen coastal cities form a "line" from North to South. Economic zones make up "areas".

If the new system of "city administering counties" is to terminate the regional blockade caused by prefectures, then the establishment of economic zones is an attempt to break up another form of regional barriers which could result from the new municipal jurisdictions. Wang Lin, director of the planning office of the Shanghai economic zone under the State Council, elaborates on the concept of economic zones in the following words:

¹Renmin Ribao, March 9, 1984

the economic zone is not a definite geographic area, but a conception of a regional location. It is a place where economic relations are relatively close. It has no definite boundaries, but an approximate location. Perhaps the economic zone might better be called an economic network, with a major city as its hub, and not an administrative region.¹⁴⁷

Accordingly, the following generalizations can be advanced about "economic zones": 1. An economic zone is created to form an inter-trade and trans-regional economic network and to strengthen economic ties among different localities within the network; 2. Since an economic zone is not an administrative unit, it does not enjoy any administrative power; 3. The major city, functioning as the hub of an economic zone, will extend its influence, (even there is no power delegated from the Center,) far beyond the boundaries of its own jurisdiction.

Under discussion were the Shanghai economic zone, the Pearl River Delta economic zone, the Southwest economic zone and the Beijing-Tianjin-Tangshan economic zone.¹⁴⁸ But Shanghai was the first place to be chosen by the State Council for the establishment of an economic zone, which includes four cities in Jiangsu Province, five cities in Zhejiang Province, and 55 counties under these cities. It was probably wise to start the experiment in the Shanghai economic zone. As the richest area in China, it provides one-fourth of the state revenue and handles one-third of the country's foreign trade. Its output for industry and

¹⁴⁷ *Beijing Review*, Vol.27, No.16, April 16, 1984. p.16-7

¹⁴⁸ *Ming Pao* Ming Pao, August 8, 1983

agriculture comprises 15 per cent of the nation's total.'¹⁴

If the Shanghai economic zone, with its obvious economic strengths, succeeds in achieving the strong economic growth, it will exert a great impact on the national economy. To reach that goal, "plans of each place and each department must be unified into a regional plan with no change in the subordination of the enterprises to the cities. It should not be that each goes its own way".¹⁵ However, since the economic zone has no administrative power, and the planning office of the Shanghai economic zone under the State Council does not seem to enjoy any authority other than that of planning, the regional planning and economic integration will depend on "the active participation and support of each place and department".¹⁶ It was said that unified plans for development within the economic zone have been worked out "on the principle of voluntariness and mutual benefit".¹⁷ Certainly mutual benefit can in some cases originate the kind of voluntariness on the part of each place and department and prompt desirable cooperation and integration. In other cases, however, mutual benefit may not exist at all, thereby making joint efforts impossible. Or even if it exists, barriers set by the local governments within the economic zone should not be ignored. Since the Shanghai economic zone stretches over two provinces and a centrally administered city, to coordinate economic activities and form a trans-regional

¹⁴ *Beijing Review*, Vol.27, No.16, April 16, 1984. p.17

¹⁵ See Premier Zhao's speech at a meeting called by the planning office of the Shanghai economic zone under the State Council, in *Ming Pao* August 20, 1983

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *Beijing Review*, Vol.27, NO.16, April 16, 1984. p.23

economic network without giving it relevant administrative power requires more exploration.

Another economic zone -- the Pearl River Delta economic zone, though at the embryonic stage, is unlikely to have a similar problem. Comprising eight cities and 24 counties in the Pearl River Delta, it covers about 46,000 square kilometres.¹⁵³ It is smaller than the Shanghai economic zone. The main difference between the two zones is that the Pearl River Delta zone is entirely within Guangdong Province, and that the provincial working group of the Delta economic zone has been placed under the Governor's direct leadership.¹⁵⁴ As a result, it will be easier for the Delta zone to achieve its goals. Governor Liang Lingguang describes the idea of the Delta economic zone in the following words:

With Guangzhou as the proposed center, Shenzhen and Zhuhai as the windows, the Pearl River Delta with many towns and villages on it as the hinterland, the South China Sea Oilfields as the supporting pillars, it (Guangdong) will turn the Pearl River Delta into an open and complex special economic region to bring about economic development and advance in technology for the mountainous regions backward districts in the province.¹⁵⁵

In comparison with the Shanghai economic zone, the idea of the Pearl River Delta economic zone is more practical. The key point here is delegation of power. As stated previously, the

¹⁵³ *Ming Pao*, March 22, 1984

¹⁵⁴ *Ming Pao*, November 26, 1983

¹⁵⁵ *Ming Pao*, April 9, 1984

Central Government has approved that Guangdong Province may adopt "specific policies and flexible measures" in guiding its economic activities. With such powers in hand, the Pearl River Delta economic zone can take advantage of its proximity to Hong Kong and Macao and its resultant ties to the outside world. Since the Pearl River Delta economic zone is located within the boundaries of a province, there is less need to deal with neighbouring provinces to overcome the barriers against regional cooperation and coordination of the specific zone. Consequently, it is quite possible that the Pearl River Delta zone will achieve more development than the Shanghai zone, though the latter's economic strength is greater.

A five-day meeting on coordination of economic cooperation by three provinces (Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou), an autonomous region (Guangxi) and a city (Chongqing) in April 1984 marks another attempt by the Central Government to encourage local initiatives in organizing regional economic cooperation on a large scale. The meeting was prompted by Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang when he inspected Guizhou Province in January this year. When Premier Zhao Ziyang inspected the same province two months later, he made detailed instructions on the meeting.''' It was disclosed that the meeting was an economic and technical one and was aimed at bringing about trans-regional economic cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, rotation of the presidency (lunliu zuozhuang) and unanimity.''' 228 bilateral or multilateral agreements on cooperation were concluded. A decision to meet once a year and

'''Guangming Ribao, April 20, 1984

'''Renmin Ribao, April 20, 1984

to establish a standing body in Chongqing was also made.'''
 Nonetheless, the crucial issue remains untouched: to what extent will the meeting be empowered to coordinate trans-regional economic activities in Southwest China?

In order to prove that setting up economic zones will assist other parts of the country, Wang Lin referred to successful precedents in the developed countries, where the economic achievements of one region brought about the prosperity of other regions.''' But the central difference between economic systems -- the market economy in certain countries and China's planned economy -- was disregarded. While China is trying to regulate its economic activities according to market demands and economic benefits, it never forgets to place the operation under the guidance of State plans and orders. Both trans-regional coordination within an economic zone and cooperation between an economic zone and the rest of the nation are largely benefit-oriented, thus inevitably conflicting from time to time with plans by the Central Government which may not be aimed at profit-making. How to enliven a planned economy by means of adjusting to market demands is an unresolved question. With fewer central controls and more powers, regional authorities could set up new industries in profitable fields "to which they channelled raw materials, denying them to more efficient producers", and disrupt desirable patterns of internal trade "which the Central Government endeavours to reach".'' The fact that the Central Government

''Ibid.

''*Beijing Review*, Vol.27, No.16, April 16, 1984. p.17

''Robert Delfs, "China Adopts a Three-tier Economy with More Power in

repeatedly calls for the correct handling of relationship among state, collectives and individuals implies that it may take time to combine successfully a planned economy with market regulation. The same fact also justifies, at least partly, some Chinese political leaders' fear that "relaxing controls and relying on the orderly anarchy of market forces to sort things out could lead to another breakdown".¹⁰⁰ Certainly their fear could also involve the fear that capitalism is favoured over socialism. It is also unclear to what degree an economic zone, which is not an administrative unit, will be allowed to organize cooperative operations in various jurisdictions and do that effectively. Mere encouragement from the Center, in the absence of clearly delegated powers, does not seem to be sufficient. The establishment of economic zones indicates the Chinese Government's efforts to promote modern mass production techniques and to improve its economy through mobilizing local entrepreneurship.

As stated earlier, administrative centralization in China has been framed by various factors. Though the nation witnessed some short periods of decentralization, the centripetal tendencies remained the principal trend in the history of the PRC. It was not

¹⁰⁰(cont'd) Peking: Mixed From the Center", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 15, 1982. p.58. Robert Delfs also contends that "there is now a shift under way towards recentralization of economic power back to the national-level ministries and commissions. But this is occurring largely at the expense of provincial and local administrations, not individual enterprises, and does not represent backtracking on reforms". (p.57) This statement is much arguable. / Actually local administrative bodies are gaining more powers. An article in *Renmin Ribao* declared that (for officials of municipal governments) powers they need to extend are "those of organizing and coordinating economy". See *Renmin Ribao*, July 27, 1984

¹⁰¹Ibid.

until the Gengshen Reforms that the *status quo* began to be challenged. Progress achieved through administrative decentralization in the past few years, especially in the economic field, is indisputable. Further study of the issue should concentrate on the problem of excessive centralized administration or on the extent to which decentralization should be employed in the pursuit of modernization. Unfortunately, efforts in this direction were often slowed down or interrupted by such discussions as whether the new ways of decentralization are compatible with socialist orthodoxy or whether they lead to restoration of capitalism. Another opposition to power-delegation came from some agencies which were not willing to give up their power. Consequently ideological conservatism and traditional concern with power will have their impact and render process of decentralization a protracted one.

V. Conclusion

The reforms initiated by Deng are impressive. Many of the changes generated by the reforms were unimaginable even a few years ago. Anyone who criticized the overconcentration of power in the Party was once labelled a "counterrevolutionary" and jailed. Local administrators who attempted to enjoy more autonomy could be blamed for setting up "independent kingdoms" and for resisting central authorities. The Gengshen Reforms are very significant in the history of the PRC mainly because Deng and his associates condemned the overconcentration of power in the Party and related it to poor performance by the administrative agencies. Moreover, a decentralized administrative system will serve China's modernization movement properly. The reforms thus brought about a resurgence of the power of bureaucracy. They also led local governments to be granted more power. Will the reforms imply the decline of the Party? Will they give birth to a much weakened Central Government and powerful local governments? Some speculation on these questions follows.

Deng launched his reform campaign soon after his political comeback in July 1977. Deng criticized China's "highly centralized management systems in the economic, political, cultural and social fields".¹⁶² Deng attributed this overcentralization of power to "inappropriate and indiscriminate centralization of all power in Party committees".¹⁶³ He called for a distinction between the

¹⁶²See Deng's speech, p.18

¹⁶³Idid., p.19

responsibilities of the Party and the government. It is likely that he "envisaged the restoration of bureaucracy and saw the need for regularity and predictability".¹⁶⁶ But how far will Deng move in fashioning a bureaucratic apparatus with less restraint by the Party? It is true that scholars are "extremely impressed with the degree to which the Chinese are engaging in experimentation".¹⁶⁷ It is also true that in early 1980 "they were unsure as to whether Deng would lead China back to a Leninist model of Party domination of State, but guided by technocratic rather than ideological considerations, or whether China was in the process of breaking completely with Marxism-Leninism".¹⁶⁸ While it is difficult to come to a final conclusion, recent events give some indication of possible future developments.

There exists a gap between the reformers' rhetoric and their accomplishments. While Deng advocates a more independent role by government officials, he has no intention of weakening Party's leading role. Although Deng endeavours to make the bureaucracy more competent, the foremost of the four criteria for promotion of civil servants¹⁶⁹ is still a political one. Deng's desire to uphold socialism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the leadership of the Party, and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought -- sends a clear message: China will in no way break with Marxism-Leninism-

¹⁶⁶Michel Oksenberg, "Economic Policy-making in China: Summer 1981", *The China Quarterly*, June 1982, No.90, p.171

¹⁶⁷Lucian W. Pye, *The Dynamics of Chinese Politics*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain Publishers, Inc., 1981) p.49

¹⁶⁸Ibid.

¹⁶⁹The four criteria for promotion of cadres are revolutionary qualities, years of age, educational level and professional competence.

Mao Zedong Thought and attenuate the leading role of the Communist Party. As Joseph Fromm writes,

With all the sweeping changes and the emphasis on individual initiative, there is one area of Chinese society that remains untouchable -- the absolute power of the Communist Party. ... As you travel around the nation, it becomes clear that the reforms Deng Xiaoping is initiating are intended in no way to weaken the Communist grip.'''

Deng himself acknowledges that "the purpose of reforming the system of Party and State leadership is precisely to adhere to and strengthen, rather than weaken, Party leadership and discipline".''' Nonetheless, the goal of strengthening the capacity of government while also enhancing the Party's role is difficult to achieve in practice. For many Party officials, it will take time to grasp the distinction between unnecessary interference with governmental affairs and the exercise of the Party's political leadership. Consequently it is likely that the strengthening of bureaucracy will be a long process.

Two months after Deng delivered his "reform" speech, Liao Gailong, one of the radical reformists in the Deng-Hu camp, outlined various ways of ending the centralization of power in the Party. Realizing that the People's Congress is a "rubber stamp", and that "deputies raise their hands to approve the documents

'''Joseph Fromm, "China Revisited: From Middle Ages To 20th Century", *U.S. News & World Report*, May 21, 1984. p.37

'''See Deng's speech. *Beijing Review*, Vol.26, No.41. October 10, 1983. p.21

prepared by the Party organs",¹⁷⁰ Liao advocates a smaller Congress of 1,000 so that the deputies can engage in serious discussion of of issues.¹⁷¹ He also envisions a bicameral legislature whereby "two houses may check and restrain each other",¹⁷² and a smaller (60-70), younger and more expert Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.¹⁷³ Nonetheless, there were still 2,973 delegates to the Sixth National People's Congress in May 1984.¹⁷⁴ The proposal of forming "the Regional House representing various areas and localities and the Social House representing the interests of various strata and enterprises"¹⁷⁵ was never acted upon. The size of the Standing Committee of the Sixth National People's Congress reminds people of a mini-Congress, consisting of one Chairman, twenty Vice-Chairmen and 133 other members.¹⁷⁶ The fact that the Chairman of the Standing Committee Peng Zhen is also a member of the CCP Politburo, that its first Vice-Chairman Chen Pixian is a member of the Secretariat, of the CCP Central Committee, and that half of its twenty Vice-Chairmen are Communists suggests the extent of the Party's influence on the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.¹⁷⁷ Among Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of that Standing Committee one is in his nineties, six are in their eighties and seven are in their seventies.¹⁷⁸ Clearly, there is a

¹⁷⁰Liao Gailong, *Issues and Studies*, December 1981, p.87

¹⁷¹Ibid., p.86

¹⁷²Ibid., p.87

¹⁷³Ibid.

¹⁷⁴*Renmin Ribao*, May 15, 1984

¹⁷⁵Liao Gailong, *Issues and Studies*, December 1981, p.87

¹⁷⁶Tao Jun, "An Analysis of the Sixth National People's Congress", *Cheng Ming*, July 1983, no.69, p.52

¹⁷⁷It is interesting to notice that there are approximately 40 million Party members among China's one billion population. See *China Daily*, July 2, 1984

¹⁷⁸Ibid., p.53

long way to go in order to transform the "rubber stamp" into "an authoritative and effective power organ".¹⁷⁷

Liao also urges judicial independence. He opposes any kind of Party interference with judicial affairs, stating that "court decisions need not be reviewed by the Party committees which do not have such power".¹⁷⁸ But there are still many cases of political interference in judicial matters. Though Peng Zhen asserts that the sufferings in ten years' internal disorder gave birth to a conspicuous statement in the new CCP Constitution which reads that "the Party organizations as well as its members must conduct their activities within the limits permitted by the Constitution and the laws of the State",¹⁷⁹ he has to acknowledge that "some comrades are not used to" laws.¹⁸⁰ Years have elapsed since Deng's "reform" speech, but there is not yet a clear commitment to the principle of judicial independence.

Liao sees the so-called unified leadership, the mixing up of the Party and the government and the substitution of the Party for government as "subterfuges for practicing arbitrary rule or dictatorship by a single person".¹⁸¹ He urges that

From now on, all government jobs will be discussed and decided by the State Council and local governments at various levels, which issue the relevant documents. The decisions will no longer be made on the instruction of the Party Central Committee

¹⁷⁷Liao Gailong, *Issues and Studies*, December 1981, p.88

¹⁷⁸Ibid., p.89

¹⁷⁹*Guangming Ribao*, May 12, 1984

¹⁸⁰Ibid.

¹⁸¹Liao Gailong, *Issues and Studies*, December 1981, p.89

and the local Party committees.'''

However, it is not so easy for many of the Party committees or secretaries to give up willingly their administrative functions and return them to governments at various levels. As was disclosed by *Renmin Ribao*, a Party secretary still thought personnel management by a director of an enterprise to be something merely nominal, though it is stipulated in "Provisional Regulations on Greater Freedom for State-owned Industrial Enterprises" issued by the State Council. In that Party secretary's opinion, personnel management could only be run by Party committees. Administrative officials must not be allowed to meddle in such matters. Otherwise it would mean repudiation of the Party's leadership.''' A Party secretary of another factory, on finding out that he was no longer in charge of personnel transfer, condemned others for "not understanding Party's principles" and complained that he, as a Party secretary, had no real responsibilities.''' Even Deng, though not holding any of the positions in the State Council or the National Congress, dismissed publicly previous assurances from two Vice-Chairmen of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress that China would not garrison troops in Hong Kong after 1997.''' That episode on May 25, 1984 could only cast doubt on the credibility of Deng's call for the distinction between responsibilities of the Party and State.

''''Ibid.

'''' *Renmin Ribao*, June 8, 1984

'''' *Renmin Ribao*, July 16, 1984

'''' Editorial, "On Deng Xiaoping's Speech of Garrisoning Troops in Hong Kong", *Cheng Ming*, June 1984, No.80, p.2

The strengthening of bureaucracy, however, will create a new generation of technocrats. With more well-educated and technically competent staff being recruited into the bureaucracy, a technocratic elite is taking shape. In Anhui Province more than 90 per cent of the mayors and county heads have now college educational background.''' The changes inside the bureaucracy concur with those within the Party. As William deB. Mills notices,

Personnel and structural changes instituted at the 12th Party Congress indicate that the political position of senior conservatives has been undermined by the beginning of the transition to a technocratic generation. ... At the 12th CC[Central Committee], Deng, now the leading figure of the revolutionary generation, set into motion a broad generational transition of the ruling elite just below the Politburo based on expertise rather than ideological fervor.'''

It is likely that the technocrats will concern themselves with political stability and economic growth. In that case, China's future will become more predictable. If Deng's successors and associates gain prominence after his departure from politics, China will probably remain a socialist country under the leadership of the Communist Party, but guided more by technological rather than ideological considerations.

As the reform movement develops, the issue of simplifying administration and the delegation of power is emerging. Deng condemned overconcentration of power and urged decentralization.

'''Ming Pao, June 4, 1984

'''William deB. Mills, "Generational Change in China", *Problems of Communism*, November/December 1983, 32-3

Deng discerns the disadvantages of monopoly of power and realizes that "our leading organs at various levels have taken charge of many matters which they should not and cannot handle or which they cannot manage effectively".¹⁰⁰ Deng even states that "no one is omnipotent and can tackle all these onerous and unfamiliar jobs".¹⁰¹ With his encouragement, decentralization moves in two directions: from Central to local governments and from governmental agencies to enterprises. The process of decentralization, however, leaves certain questions open. One of them is whether the further development of decentralization will generate so-called "independent kingdoms" which will challenge authorities at the Center. Judging from recent events, delegation of power to local administrative bodies does not seem to cause problems for the Central Government. Decentralization is carried out largely in the economic field with the aim of enlivening the economy. There is no sign that the leaders in Peking intend to delegate powers in fields such as the political or military ones, though local governments are gaining more powers in personnel management.¹⁰² Liao advocated that the masses "have the right to discuss and decide on important problems of their own units, and to suggest to organizations of a higher level to dismiss incompetent leading personnel of their own units".¹⁰³ He proposed that "they may also gradually hold elections to elect leaders within appropriate limits".¹⁰⁴ What Liao encouraged has already come true in some

¹⁰⁰ See Deng's speech. *Beijing Review*, Vol.26, NO.40. October 3, 1983. p.18

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² *Renmin Ribao*, July 29, 1984

¹⁰³ Liao Gailong, *Issues and Studies*, December 1981, p.95

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

regions and enterprises. In spring 1984 Wuhan City in Hubei Province announced that more than two hundred enterprises there had their directors and managers elected by the masses.''' Nonetheless it is unlikely that the practice of direct democracy at the grassroots level will be extended to the political field. The fact that the experimentation with direct election of delegates to People's Congress at the grassroots level in 1980 was abruptly discontinued''' unmistakably indicates that decentralization is well controlled and much limited. Even where the masses are allowed to elect directors or managers in their enterprises, from time to time there were cases in which those elected administrators had to resign under the pressure from above. Consequently current decentralization seems to be confined to the economic field and is unlikely to spawn "independent kingdoms" strong enough to challenge the central authorities.

It is possible, however, that decentralization will create local despots(tu Huangdi), who, as highest authorities in their jurisdiction, administer at their discretion with fewer checks from the Center. To guard against such unwanted developments, Deng reestablished commissions for discipline inspection. They were assigned the following jobs:

1. To examine and deal with relatively important or complicated cases of violation of the Constitution and discipline of the Party or the laws and decrees of the State by Party organizations or Party members;

'''Renmin Ribao, July 25, 1984

'''Xu Hang, "Conservative Reform of the Political System", *Cheng Ming*, No.73, November 1983, p.57

2. To decide on or cancel disciplinary measures against Party members involved in such cases;

3. To deal with complaints and appeals made by Party members.'''

These organs have resolved numerous complex cases. Clearly, the Party does not seem to abandon its role of supervising the bureaucracy.

Another means of fighting against local abuse is the press. The regular page of "Letters From Our Readers" in *Renmin Ribao* disclosed malpractice of Party and government officials. The steps that have been taken so far in this aspect are helpful in treating pathology in bureaucracy but still far from sufficient. While power is being delegated to lower levels of administration, their responsiveness would be improved if public participation is really encouraged, and ways of public checking on bureaucratic performance are guaranteed and legalized. Deng perceives some advantages of Western patterns of administration. As he says, "Stalin did things that seriously undermined the socialist legal system, which Comrade Mao Zedong once said could never happen in Western countries like Britain, France and the United States".''' But there is no reason to believe that Deng will try "Western-style democracy" to prevent the bureaucracy from becoming unresponsive to the public interest. Therefore, how to supervise effectively various levels of government is a vexing question in China as elsewhere.

''' "Constitution of the Communist Party China", *Beijing Review*, Vol. 25, No. 38. September 20, 1982. p. 21

''' See Deng's speech. *Beijing Review*, Vol. 26, No. 40. October 3, 1983. p. 21

Six years have passed since Deng made his "reform" speech. Things have been changing rapidly. Alterations point in a direction of having the bureaucracy assume more administrative responsibilities and of local governments being granted more powers. While the rise of the bureaucracy is certain, it is not designed to weaken the leading role of the Party. The emergence of a strong bureaucracy unchecked by the Party is unlikely in the Chinese context. The resurgence of bureaucracy is accompanied by the development of a new technocratic-intellectual elite within the administrative hierarchy. As more technicians and intellectuals are recruited into the bureaucracy, their influence has increased. The formation of a technocratic-intellectual elite in the Party is inevitable. If that group prevails, it is likely that more emphasis will be laid on science, technology and economic growth rather than on political movement. Measures taken in decentralizing administration have so far proved to be successful in promoting economic prosperity. Yet there is no way to expect that the Central Government might give up its grip on the national economic lifelines. Either divergence of political views among top leaders or imbalance in economic development could result in recentralization. There is no straight path ahead towards modernization. But as long as the Chinese leaders continue their efforts to achieve economic prosperity, decentralization, from which China has benefited greatly since the reform movement, will remain the main trend in the process of reform. It may be premature to assert at this point that the reforms are well established and will develop smoothly. It is, however, safe to conclude that the

Gengshen Reforms, which have so far yielded many admirable fruits, are unlikely to be easily reversed.

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